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"COME
UNTO ME"

DAILY READINGS
ON THE SAYINGS
♦♦♦ OF CHRIST

W. G. Johnston.

26 July 1915.

Whiting

“C O M E U N T O M E .”

115
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"COME UNTO ME."

*DAILY READINGS ON THE
SAYINGS OF CHRIST.*

BY

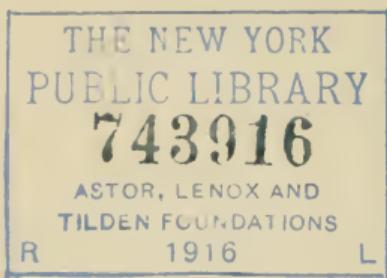
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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
FIRST DAY	1
SECOND DAY	5
THIRD DAY	9
FOURTH DAY	13
FIFTH DAY	17
SIXTH DAY	21
SEVENTH DAY	25
EIGHTH DAY	29
NINTH DAY	33
TENTH DAY	37
ELEVENTH DAY	42
TWELFTH DAY	47
THIRTEENTH DAY	51
FOURTEENTH DAY	56
FIFTEENTH DAY	60
SIXTEENTH DAY	65
SEVENTEENTH DAY	70
EIGHTEENTH DAY	75

	PAGE
NINETEENTH DAY	79
TWENTIETH DAY	83
TWENTY-FIRST DAY	87
TWENTY-SECOND DAY	92
TWENTY-THIRD DAY	97
TWENTY-FOURTH DAY	101
TWENTY-FIFTH DAY	106
TWENTY-SIXTH DAY	110
TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY	115
TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY	119
TWENTY-NINTH DAY	124
THIRTIETH DAY	128
THIRTY-FIRST DAY	132

“COME UNTO ME.”

FIRST DAY.

“ Not the labours of my hands
Can fulfil Thy law’s demands ;
Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears for ever flow,
All for sin could not atone :
Thou must save, and Thou alone.”

“I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”—LUKE v. 32.

A MESSAGE of hope and of humiliation ! We often hear in the present day that Christ is no greater than other teachers ; that Buddha, or Socrates, or Aristotle, and the other great leaders of human thought, have morals as pure, precepts as perfect, and systems as holy, as Christianity itself. On every side and in every way this doctrine is pressed upon our attention ; and it is well for us, as we consider the words of Christ, to ask, What is the difference between Christianity and other religions ? To contend that there is no truth, no beauty, no purity, in the systems that we reject, is idle, and merely

shows our own ignorance; and yet, if we did not believe that Christianity possesses something which is wanting in all other religions, we should have no right to try and plant the Standard of the Cross wherever man is found.

Our Lord states the difference in these words, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." All other teachers the world has ever seen have come to call the righteous; their words are addressed to those who already love virtue, to those who long to lead the higher life, to those who are educated and intellectual. "The mob" are dismissed to their sin and degradation.

Jesus Christ came to preach the Gospel to the poor, and His most glorious title was "The Friend of Sinners."

This is a message of humiliation. To follow the call of the great moral teachers of the world is to proclaim to all that we are strong and wise and good; to follow the call of Christ is to acknowledge that we are weak and sinful. Is it any wonder that men seek on every side for another salvation than that which is in Jesus Christ and Him crucified? "I came to call sinners." None, then, but sinners can go to Him; and if we go to Him, we must bear the reproach of being called by the name of sinners. We must confess that we have no power, no strength; if we would be Christians, we must depend wholly upon Christ.

But it is also a message of hope. It is hard to

understand how any can look into their own hearts without discovering that sin is a dweller there ; it is hard to understand how any can try to do good without finding also that evil is present with them. As we watch our daily life, we are not, as a rule, struck by our own holiness, but the heartfelt cry rises to our lips, "Enter not into judgment with Thy servant, O Lord, for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified." It is then that the comfortable words of Christ fall sweetly on the ear, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." There is no need for us to say, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord ;" our very sin is our plea. Lord, we are sinful, therefore come to us ; without sin we should have no claim upon Thy mercy. Thou didst come to seek and to save the lost ; therefore, Lord, Thou art our Saviour.

Are there those in the world who have no sins to be forgiven, no evil nature to draw them back from holiness ? If there are, it is to them that the words may be addressed, "Be wise, be holy, be pure !" "Be wise, be holy, be pure !" grand words and good ; *but where is the power ?* Of what use is it to say "walk" to a paralysed man unless at the same time you put new life into his veins ? It is capital advice to say "live ;" but how if the patient dies ? Precepts and advice alike fall powerless on our ears, but to us who are not ashamed to own our sin comes the message of hope, "by the appear-

ing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel."

Weep not, despair not, though thy sin is great. Still there is hope; I am the sinner's Friend! Is thy soul weak? Fear not, for I am strong. And hast thou failed in that long weary quest for holiness and truth? Seek Me and live! My blood can wash thy sins and make thee white. I am all-powerful; therefore I can save. I am all-loving; therefore I will save. I came to call the sinners—not the good!

Almighty and everlasting God, who hatest nothing that Thou hast made, and dost forgive the sins of all them that are penitent; create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we, worthily lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of thee, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

SECOND DAY.

“Jesus calls us o'er the tumult
Of our life's wild restless sea ;
Day by day His sweet voice soundeth,
Saying, Christian, follow Me !”

“Follow Me.”—MATT. ix. 9.

THIS is one of Christ's shortest sayings, and yet it unfolds a whole life-story.

“Jesus saw a man named Matthew sitting at the receipt of custom, and He saith unto him, Follow Me ; and he arose and followed Him.” Such is Matthew's own account of the event. How simply it reads ; how lightly he passes over the decision that cut his life in two, and landed him on the other side of a great gulf from which there was no return ! “He saith unto him, Follow Me ; and he arose and followed Him.” Matthew evidently did not hesitate ; there was something in that Divine call that enforced his obedience ; the account is word for word the same in each of the three synoptical Gospels, except that St. Luke adds one of his graphic touches, “And he *left all*, rose up, and followed Him.”

Matthew must then have acknowledged the

divinity of Christ; for unless we admit the right of an authority exercised over us, we cannot submit to it. Christ had the right to demand from him the sacrifice of all—lands, money, friends, ease, and position; He had the right to lay upon him the burden of poverty, labour, hardships, and persecution. Matthew acknowledged this right, and therefore he arose and followed Him.

He must also have been ready to submit his will to that of God. He might have believed in Christ's right to command his obedience, and yet have refused to act up to his belief. He might have said, Surely I know what is best for myself. He might have shut his heart to the call, and gone on his way in proud indifference; but, on the contrary, he became as a little child, and humbly bent his will to the Master's. There is a beautiful proof of his humility in the fact that it is only from the other Gospels we learn that the “great feast” made for Christ and His disciples, was given by Matthew in his own house. “As Jesus sat at meat in the house,” is the expression we find in his own Gospel, not signifying whose house it was, and leaving it to others to mention the splendour of the entertainment. Humility was as rare a virtue then as it is now, and probably there have been but few in the world's history who would so carefully have omitted *self* from the records of a personal narrative. We only need the evidence of our own hearts to tell us that the “Follow Me” of Christ involves humility.

“ For hereunto were ye called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow His steps ; who humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” If humility and obedience were united in Him who did no sin, how much more necessary must they be for us, His weak and unworthy servants !

It is one of the promises of Heaven that they who are “ worthy ” shall “ follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth.” But if we would walk the golden streets, and share in the triumph of the King of Saints, we must overcome in the great tribulation, wash our robes here on earth, and make them white in the blood of the Lamb. We must acknowledge Christ’s right to claim our lives for His own, we must be ready to give up our will to His will, and then, with no reluctant, no grudging obedience, rise up and follow where the Master leads.

Trust Me, My child ! I ask no harder thing of thee than I Myself have known before. I tread the path before thee, feel its thorns, unravel all its dark and tedious ways. It may be dark, it must be steep and weary ; yet do not fear, for thou shalt never tread but in My footprints, and My footsteps lead right through the darkness to the Throne of God.

O Almighty God, who by Thy blessed Son didst

call Matthew from the receipt of custom to be an apostle and evangelist; grant us grace to forsake all covetous desires and inordinate love of riches, and to follow the same Thy Son Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end. Amen.

THIRD DAY.

“ ‘ Lovest thou Me?’ I hear my Saviour say :
Would that my heart had power to answer ‘ Yea.
Thou knowest all things, Lord, in heaven above
And earth beneath ; Thou knowest that I love.’
But ’tis not so, in word, in deed, in thought,
I do not, cannot, love Thee as I ought ;
Thy love must give that power, Thy love alone ;
There’s nothing worthy of Thee but Thine own.
Lord, with the love wherewith Thou lovest me,
Reflected on Thyself, I would love Thee.”

“ Lovest thou Me ?”—JOHN xxi. 15.

THREE times had Peter denied Christ, and three times does Christ ask him to confess his love. “ Lovest thou Me more than these ?” In the old self-confident days, Peter had passionately declared his devotion to Christ, yet he had failed ; and now, in answer to the question which recalls his former vows, he answers humbly, not venturing to claim the highest form of love of which Christ speaks, “ Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee.” “ He saith unto him, Feed My lambs.”

But this is not enough. Peter had failed in comparison with others, but has he *any* true love for his Divine Master ? “ He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me ?”

Not now does He ask, Lovest thou Me more than all others who love Me, but—Dost thou love at all, hast thou any spark of the heavenly fire? And again Peter answers, "Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee." Not trusting to his own belief in his love, he appeals to the unerring knowledge of Christ, *Thou knowest it, Lord, therefore it must be true.* "He saith unto him, Guide My sheep."

But Christ must probe deeper yet. Peter had not laid claim to a full love and adoration, but had he indeed a right to lay claim to any love at all? and in this third question our Lord changes His mode of expression and uses the weaker word, "Lovest thou Me?" Hast thou even this poor *human* love which thou professest for Me?

Then Peter was cut to the heart; the last time he had seen his Lord doubtless came up before his view. That long silent look of Jesus, mindful of His erring disciple even amid His agony, could not have failed to be present with him through the days of darkness that followed; and now, in the first flush of joyful recognition, to be met with this questioning of his love, was more than he could bear. "Peter was grieved because He said unto him the third time, Lovest thou Me? And he said, Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee!" "Jesus saith unto him, Feed My sheep."

This is forgiveness indeed! Who that has failed in devotion towards the one beloved of their heart, does not know the flood of joy that follows the

permission to serve once more? "Peter, thou hast denied Me, denied Me with oaths and curses, hast said that thou didst never know Me; yet to thee, unfaithful friend, backsliding servant, to thee I commit the lambs, the sheep of My flock, that thou mayest guide and feed them."

The sin of Peter is one which many find it hard to forgive; we cannot believe that we should treat any earthly friend as he treated his Lord and Master; yet it is a sin into which we have all of us fallen. Not one among us, if we speak the truth, but can recall some critical moment in our lives, when, rather than suffer reproach, we have denied the Lord whose name we bear. To us, as to Peter, He comes with no torrent of accusation, no bitter reproof; to us, as to Peter, He puts the heart-stirring question, "Lovest thou Me?" It is well for us if we can give Peter's answer.

When we first turned to Christ as the Friend of sinners, the Lord whom we would follow through life and death, vows and promises burned upon our lips; but when those vows have been once broken, those promises forgotten, it is no time for fresh protestations. Well for us if we can appeal to Christ's divine and all-seeing wisdom and say, Lord, Thou seest the hidden things of the heart, Thou knowest that I love Thee!

Thou hast denied Me! Yet I threaten not, though thou hast put Me to an open shame. Fear not; I love thee still. Yea, I know all things, and

I see thy love washed in the bitter tears of fierce despair; I will restore thee to thy name and place; faithless and perjured, thou shalt serve Me still!

O God, who knowest us to be set in the midst of so many and great dangers, that by reason of the frailty of our nature we cannot always stand upright; grant to us such strength and protection as may support us in all dangers, and carry us through all temptations, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

FOURTH DAY.

“ Saviour Divine, Thou art my King,
 My King in heaven above ;
Low at Thy feet myself I fling,
 And long to show my love.
But dare I any words employ
 That speak of love to Thee,
Who didst endure so much with joy
 To show Thy love to me ?

“ Thy servant, then, my King, to be
 I'll reckon a delight ;
The heaviest burden borne for Thee
 Becomes a service light.
A loyal subject I would be,
 A very slave of Thine,
But all Thy slaves have liberty,
 A liberty divine ! ”

“ If ye love Me, keep My commandments.”—JOHN xiv. 15.

“ If ye keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love.”
—JOHN xv. 10.

THESE two sayings of Christ taken together make a full and perfect whole. Love is the cause and obedience the effect; obedience is the cause and love the effect. Obedience and love are unchangeably united in the hearts of the servants of Christ; obedience is the proof of love, love is the result of obedience. We may declare our love by words, but we must

prove it by deeds. It is an easy matter to profess Christianity, but it is a hard matter to show forth our religion not only with our lips but in our lives.

"If ye love Me, ye will keep My commandments," as the Revised Version gives it. At first sight the words appear almost unnecessary, as some have said of their echo in the First Epistle of St. John. "Little children, let no man deceive you; He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous." How is it possible for us to be deceived in this matter? He that doeth righteousness must of necessity be righteous; what need is there for such a statement as this? And yet, as we look round the world, we find its need brought forcibly home to our hearts. How many there are, calling themselves Christians, whose actions will not reach to the standard of an upright morality! Dishonesty, untruthfulness, injustice, pride, ill-temper, self-seeking, these and such as these are lightly passed over, while men point to their outward profession and say, "Behold, we are the servants of God!"

"Little children, let no man deceive you; he that doeth righteousness is righteous."

Surely these words were written by St. John as he recalled the burning utterance of Christ, "If ye love Me, ye will keep My commandments." There is no love without obedience, and he who calls himself the follower of Christ while his life

is still lived in accordance with his own will, must hear at last the terrible sentence, "Verily I say unto you, I know you not!"

One of the most dangerous tendencies of the present day is the attempt to test our religious life by the state of our feelings.

" He who lets his feelings run
In soft luxurious flow,
Shrinks when hard service must be done,
And faints at every woe.

" Faith's meanest deed more favour bears,
Where hearts and wills are weighed,
Than brightest transports, choicest prayers,
Which bloom their hour and fade."

These lines breathe the very spirit of Christ's teaching. There is nothing more fatal than to say to ourselves, If I love God I shall have unclouded peace in my soul; I shall have continual delight in holiness; I shall be ever in sweetest meditation on heavenly things! It may be so, but what our Lord says on the subject is this: "If ye love Me, ye will keep My commandments."

At first sight, perhaps, the words seem stern, but they are carried out in the whole of Christ's ministry. Never once do we find Him encouraging a morbid growth of sentiment. Dost thou believe?—then go thy way and sin no more. He taught constantly that feeling, unless it is translated into action, fades, grows cold, and dies. What is obedience but acted love? and all the fancied sternness of the words

melts away when we read them in the light of the answering promise: "If ye keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love." It is not to drive us to the bondage of a hard slavery that Christ commands us to obey Him, but because He knows that though He may still love His disobedient children, we cannot love Him unless we keep His commandments.

Wouldst thou love Me? Then love with deeds, not words; for though thy heart should own thy Saviour's name, if thou in life shouldst serve another lord, love must grow cold and die. Because I loved, I came from heaven to live and die for thee; because thou lovest Me, go forth and work. Labour is sweet for those thy heart holds dear, and work for Him thou lovest shall be love.

O God, who didst show Thy love toward us by sending Thy blessed Son to live and die upon earth for our salvation, help us to show forth our love toward Thee, not only with our lips, but in our lives, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

FIFTH DAY.

“ No distance breaks the tie of blood :
Brothers are brothers evermore ;
Nor wrong, nor wrath of deadliest mood,
That magic may o’erpower.
Oft, ere the common source be known,
The kindred drops will claim their own,
And throbbing pulses silently
Move heart towards heart by sympathy.

“ So is it with true Christian hearts ;
Their mutual share in Jesu’s blood
An everlasting bond imparts
Of holiest brotherhood.
Oh, might we all our lineage prove,
Give and forgive, do good and love,
By soft endearments in kind strife
Lightening the load of daily life ! ”

“ A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another.”—JOHN xiii. 34; xv. 12, 17.

THREE times in the course of His last address to His disciples did our Lord repeat the “ commandment ” that they were to show their love for Him by keeping. Love, love, love ; this is the sum of Christianity. If ye love Me, ye will love. Love not only thy neighbour as thyself, not only one another, but love thy enemies ; love the sinner, the friendless, the fallen, love with a love that beareth

all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Without love our most eloquent vows are hollow, our prayers, our alms, our faith even is worthless ; and yet, in the face of this plain teaching of Christ and His apostles, how many there are who give love but a secondary place in the list of Christian virtues !

Surely we do not need to learn to love ! The infant loves its mother before it can speak or walk ; love is the first instinct of human nature. True, but "greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his *friend*." The love which Christianity teaches is a love which contradicts the natural instinct of the heart, and wherever we see men heaping coals of fire on the heads of those who have injured them, we know that the spirit of the Divine Master is working in their hearts. Christ came that He might lay down His life for His enemies. It is easy enough to love those whom we love ; but He teaches us to love those whom we do not love.

There is no way of escaping from His command. We cannot excuse ourselves by saying that by loving the sinner we fear to encourage him. Surely none ever hated sin as Christ did, who, that He might destroy the power of sin, endured the agony of the Cross and Passion ! His whole life on earth was one crusade against sin, and yet He never addressed a sinner in other terms than those of the tenderest love and consideration. Hypocrites alone met with

denunciations from His lips. Of the fallen, degraded, and outcast He said only, These are they to whom I came ; “ for they that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.”

In this, as in all other parts of the Christian life, we need to remember our Lord’s injunction, “ Learn of Me, and ye shall find rest unto your souls.” No spirit is so unrestful as the fault-finding, uncharitable, grudging spirit. There is no happiness to such a one ; for though they do their best to make those around them miserable, their success does not give them happiness, and they generally make themselves the most miserable of all. Nor is it only unrestful—it is an ungodly spirit ; “ for if a man loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen ? ” If we would prove our Christianity, we must love. “ If ye love Me, ye will keep My commandments ; ” “ This is My commandment, that ye love one another.”

Such love as this can only be instilled from on high. If love is to be the supreme principle of our lives, it must be divine, for only so can it endure through the trials, and disappointments, and controversies, and misunderstandings, and misrepresentations, and mysteries, and perplexities, that go to make up the sum of human life.

How many resolutions we make to show forth this love in our lives, and how many times we break them ! Angry words, hasty words, censorious words, crowd upon our lips while the resolve is yet

warm within our hearts. It is John, the beloved disciple, who teaches us the most about love, but a peculiar and pathetic interest attaches itself to the words of Peter in his First Epistle. Peter, with his hasty spirit and his vehement indignation against those who rejected his Master, his passionate avowals, his eager denials—Peter surely was speaking from the depths of a hard-won experience when he summed up all his teaching in the words, “Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another; be pitiful, be courteous, not rendering evil for evil, nor railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing.”

If thou wouldst show thy love to Me, My child, it cannot be by wounding those I love. Hate not the sinner, for I love him still. For as the sun draws flowers from the earth, so love draws graces from the darkest soul. Love Me, and as My Father loved the world, with thy whole heart love all men, high or low, or friends or foes, as I have loved you—*love!*

O Lord, who hast taught us that all our doings without charity are nothing worth, send Thy Holy Ghost, and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of charity, the very bond of peace and of all virtues, without which whosoever liveth is counted dead before Thee: grant this for Thine only Son Jesus Christ’s sake. Amen.

SIXTH DAY.

“ Light of the World, we hail Thee
 Flushing the eastern skies ;
Never shall darkness veil Thee
 Again from human eyes.
Too long, alas ! withholden,
 Now spread from shore to shore,
Thy light, so glad and golden,
 Shall set on earth no more.

“ Light of the World, illumine
 This darkened land of Thine,
Till everything that’s human
 Be filled with light divine ;
Till every tongue and nation,
 From sin’s dominion free,
Shall rise a new creation
 Of love and purity.”

“ I am the light of the world.”—JOHN viii. 12, ix. 5, xii. 46.

OUR Lord called Himself three times by this name, and it was twice given to Him, once by Simeon, and once by John the Baptist. It was prophesied by the seer of old that the Messiah should be the dawning of light to the nations. “ The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light ; they that dwell in the darkness of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.”

As light was the first created of all things in the

visible world, so is it also in the spiritual world. "God said, Let there be light, and it was light." "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus." Light is the indispensable condition of life. Without it we could have neither growth nor work; and as the keenest eyesight is useless without light, so the most far-reaching intellect is practically powerless until it is illumined from on high. The plant hidden in darkness withers and dies, and the soul that tries to exist in its own wisdom and truth must become feebler and feebler until it fades away altogether. Without light there can be no progress; a state of darkness necessitates a state of uncertainty and helplessness; it is in the light alone that we go forward boldly. - "If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world," and "he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

Without light we can have no chance of discovering our faults. How often some object that we have admired in twilight proves of but little value when viewed in the full light of day! In the twilight of our own morality we look at our hearts with complacency and deem them pure and good; but when once the light of God shines in upon them, the stains and blemishes hidden by the favouring darkness are ruthlessly brought to light, and we are

forced to exclaim that “there is none that doeth good, no not one.” Therefore Christ tells us that “light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.” Who amongst us, knowing the evil that lies concealed within, can dare to pray, “Lighten our darkness, we beseech Thee, O Lord”?

“Eternal Light! Eternal Light!
How pure that soul must be,
When, placed within Thy searching sight,
It shrinks not, but with calm delight
Can live and look on Thee!”

But there is no greater purifier than the light. Light and air are the first requisites of health; and if we would be set free from the works of darkness, we must not shrink from bringing them to the light. Let in the light, and the shadows must necessarily flee away; to deny it admittance is to ensure our everlasting darkness.

“I am the light of the world!” Our Lord spoke these words as He stood in the court of the Temple, where the great golden candlesticks were placed, which were lighted at the Feast of Tabernacles in remembrance of the pillar of fire that guided the Israelites through the wilderness journey. Light is the guide of our path and the lamp of our feet; the prayer of the Jews from the days of old had been, “Send out Thy light and Thy truth; let them lead me, and let them bring me to Thy holy hill.” The Light of the World is our guide; in His light

alone shall we see light, and it is only as we follow Him that we shall reach the shining of the full and perfect day.

And dost thou dwell in darkness ? do the night's deep shadows lie upon thy longing heart ? Look up to Me. I am the light of life. I will pour out My radiancy divine and fill thee with My glory ; I will lead and guide thy feet. I am thy Star, thy Sun, who shall arise with healing in His wings !

O God, who hast sent Thy only Son to be a light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of Thy people Israel, shine in our hearts, we beseech Thee, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

SEVENTH DAY.

“ Light of the World, before Thee
Our spirits prostrate fall ;
We worship, we adore Thee,
The life, the light of all.
With Thee is no forgetting
Of all Thy hand hath made ;
Thy rising hath no setting,
Thy sunshine hath no shade.

“ Light of the World, Thy beauty
Steals into every heart,
And glorifies with duty
Life’s poorest, humblest part.
Thou robest in Thy splendour
The simple ways of men,
And helpest them to render
Light back to Thee again.”

“ Ye are the light of the world.”—MATT. v. 14.

If Christ is the light of the world, how can His people be the light of the world ? Does not one statement involve a contradiction of the other ? If it is true that we have no goodness in ourselves, that the holiness of Buddha cannot be “ the light of Asia,” nor the holiness of Socrates “ the light of Greece,” surely it must also be true that the holiness of the followers of Christ cannot be the “ light of

the world." Why should they claim for themselves that which they deny to others, and how, maintaining that the world without Christ lies in darkness, can they point to their own deeds of love and holiness, and say, "These are the light of the world"?

But it is just here that we find one of the great contrasts between Christianity and other religions. In true Christianity we never lose our sense of complete dependence upon Christ. There was no reason why the pupil of Buddha should not become as holy as Buddha himself; no reason why the pupil of Socrates or Aristotle should not become as wise as his master; but the moment that the disciple of Christ loses the sense of his own utter dependence upon a divine strength, that moment he falls.

As well might the stars exclaim, "We will shine with no help from the sun," as the Christian hope to be the light of the world except as he receives his light from the Sun of Righteousness. "Arise and shine!" cries the prophet to the Church of Christ; show forth the beams of thy glory amid the darkness that covers the earth and the gross darkness that covers the people; arise and shine, "*for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee!*" "Walk as children of light," says the apostle. "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and *Christ shall give thee light.*"

"Christ shall give thee light." It is only as we reflect Him before the world that our "light shall break forth as the morning." Our Lord Himself

compares His people to candles, which are lighted to give light to all that are in the house. It is from Him that they must be lighted; for "that was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." As lamps, which are dark in themselves, are lighted at one central source of light, and carried out into all the dark places of the house, so we, acknowledging that we are dark in ourselves, are kindled at the heavenly source of all true light, that we may shine in all the dark places of the earth. "I am the light of the world"—"Ye are the light of the world." The statements are no longer a contradiction, for one is merely the natural development of the other.

When we have once fully grasped this truth, we need never fear lest the sense of our office of light-bearers to the world should fill us with pride. Boasting is excluded, for we must first of all admit that our light is only a reflection. We are to let our light shine before men; yes, even that they may see our good works; not that men may praise us, but that they may glorify our Father which is in heaven.

Nor need we ever fear that our light will go out. If our good deeds were the fruit of our own morality, how often we must dread that they would fail us in the hour of need! What security could we have, knowing the weakness of our mortal nature, that the springs of love and truth and peace would not dry up within our hearts? But when we know

that our light is drawn from an eternal and unfailing source, we know also that the sun must grow cold and die before the stars can fade.

The nearer we approach the sun, the brighter and clearer our light will be; the more we absorb of His glory, the fuller beams will our souls give forth. If day by day our hearts draw closer to the Light of the World, our path through life will be "as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

Arise and shine! shine, for thy light is come; the Dayspring from on high, the Light of Life, visits thy soul, that lay in shades of death. Arise! I give thee light, and in thy heart kindle a heavenly flame, that thou mayest show to all the world His praise, who called thee forth out of the darkness to His marvellous light.

Merciful Lord, we beseech thee to cast Thy bright beams of light upon Thy Church, that it, being enlightened by the doctrine of Thy blessed apostles and evangelists, may so walk in the light of Thy truth that it may at length attain to the light of everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

EIGHTH DAY

“ Say, when in pity ye have gazed
 On the wreathed smoke afar,
That o'er some town, like mist upraised,
 Hung, hiding sun and star,
Then as ye turned your weary eye
 To the green earth and open sky,
Were ye not fain to doubt how Faith could dwell
Amid that weary glare in this world's citadel ?

“ There are in this loud stunning tide
 Of human care and crime,
With whom the melodies abide
 Of th' everlasting chime ;
Who carry music in their heart
 Through dusky lane and wrangling mart,
Plying their daily task with busier feet
 Because their secret souls a holy strain repeat.”

“ I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil.”
—JOHN xvii. 15.

THE disciples must have longed that they might enter into joy and rest with their Master. If it was expedient for them that He should go away, surely it was expedient for them also that they should go in with Him through the everlasting doors, to a land where sin and evil could no longer assail them. Surely the loving Lord, who cared for them so ten-

derly, the all-wise Lord who foresaw the persecutions and troubles that lay before them, would pray the Father that He might bring His chosen people with Him, and land them safe upon the sinless shore.

The words must have fallen coldly upon their longing hearts, “I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world.”

What hope did He give them to cheer the prospect? “In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” If Christ had indeed overcome the world, what need was there for them to stay behind? Why must they suffer and toil and struggle?

For the sake of the world and for their own sake! Christ had overcome the world that His disciples might conquer it. We might at first sight imagine that a belief in Christ’s divine work would stay our own exertions and induce us to say there is nothing left for us to do; but, on the contrary, “Who is he that overcometh the world but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?” It is only as we believe that Christ came to save the world and raise the souls of men to new life and strength, that we are able to join the conflict and fulfil the task that He has committed to our charge.

But it was also for their own sake that the disciples must stay awhile outside the heavenly gates. “As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world; and for their sakes

I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." Christ by suffering was sanctified or set apart for the service of God in the world, and His servants must follow the same path. He has overcome the world in the hearts of His people, that they may be enabled to conquer it. This consecration to God's service is not to be found by leaving the world, but by remaining in it. The disciples may have thought that they would be most truly set apart for holiness if they served among the angel host who praise God day and night in His temple; but their Master was wiser than they were. There is no victory without warfare. The world is the field where alone the battle can be fought.

There is a search for holiness among all the nations of the world; none are so indifferent that they have not some aspirations towards holy things. But it is Christ who teaches us that holiness is found in duty. It is not in penance and in pilgrimage, in almsgiving and devotions, that holiness lies; the world is set in our own hearts, and unless we could divorce ourselves from our very souls, we can never escape from the world as long as we live. Thank God that the higher life has been made possible for us as we pursue our earthly callings; that it is not the cloister that makes the saint. Only one power can make a saint, and that is the indwelling grace of God; the outer circumstances of life are helpless to let or hinder. We are left in the world, but we are not left defenceless; the Holy

Spirit is sent down to us to keep our hearts from evil and to inspire them with good. Each act, each part of our daily lives, may be made a stepping-stone to holiness. "Unloving words are meant to make us gentle, and delays teach patience, and care teaches faith, and press of business makes us look out for minutes to give to God, and disappointment is a special messenger to summon our thoughts to heaven."

And wouldst thou leave the world, poor weary soul, lay down thine arms and quit the battlefield ? In Mine own hour of anguish I have cried, "Let now this cup pass from Me, O my God !" But where wouldst thou be now had I not also cried, "Thy will be done" ? Wouldst thou have rest ? It comes through faithful toil. Wouldst thou have joy ? It comes through conquered sin. Wouldst thou have peace ? It comes through battles won !

O God, the protector of all that trust in Thee, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy ; increase and multiply upon us Thy mercy ; that, Thou being our ruler and guide, we may so pass through things temporal that we finally lose not the things eternal. Grant this, O Heavenly Father, for Jesus Christ's sake, our Lord. Amen.

NINTH DAY.

“ In the hour of trial,
 Jesu, pray for me,
Lest by base denial
 I depart from Thee,
When Thou seest me waver,
 With a look recall,
Nor for fear or favour
 Suffer me to fall.

“ With its witching pleasures
 Would this vain world charm,
Or its sordid treasures
 Spread to work me harm ;
Bring to my remembrance
 Sad Gethsemane,
Or in darker semblance,
 Cross-crowned Calvary.”

“ The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me.”—JOHN xiv. 30.

OUR Lord’s last dread conflict with Satan was drawing on. Already the air seemed thick with the wings of the hosts of hell, who in one last furious onset sought to overwhelm the Lord of life and glory.

And yet, in face of the nearing struggle, Christ could declare to His disciples, “ The prince of this world hath nothing in Me ! ”

Had He then no temptations? “He was in all points tempted, like as we are.” And as in this farewell gathering He looked back on the years of His earthly life, now drawing to a close, the spiritual conflicts so far outweighed the bodily sufferings, that He exclaimed to His faithful followers, “Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations.”

The prince of this world came, but he could gain no hold upon that sinless heart; there was nothing in Christ’s nature that responded to temptation. Again and again was He subjected to the trial, and again and again the tempter fell back—foiled. How different is the case with us! Our hearts are ready for sin; Satan tempts us, but we yield to the sins “we are inclined to.” “Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed.”

Shakespeare has impressed this lesson upon us with wonderful power in his great lay-sermon of *Macbeth*. The witches, in whom he embodies temptation, meet Macbeth and his friend Banquo upon the heath of Forres. To both is opened a glittering prospect; but Macbeth, who had already dallied with thoughts of sin, seizes eagerly upon the murderous idea; while Banquo, whose nature is pure and honest as the daylight, shrinks back in horror.

So is it with us; the temptation from without falls like a spark upon the fuel prepared within, and the fire of sin is kindled.

Yet we must not excuse our sin on the ground of our predisposition to temptation. A man liable to a certain disease would be severely blamed if he put himself wilfully into the way of infection. "Watch ye and pray," said Christ, "lest ye enter into temptation." Sleep not; see where your danger lies; then will you also be able to guard against it. How few among us really take the trouble to discover what sins we are especially prone to; how few pray to be shown their temptations! Though we may be given to vanity, we are yet ever self-seeking; or to pride—we forget to pray for humility; or to hastiness and wrath—we keep no watch on the door of our lips. Yet Christ has promised to guard us from danger, for has He not Himself taught us to pray, "Lead us not into temptation"?

But if we are to win our crown through conflict, we must be at times assailed with temptation, even as Christ was; and yet it is our own fault if we are overcome. The tempter may be strong and powerful, but we have God's distinct promise that we shall not be tempted above that we are able to bear. There is a way of escape with every temptation. God will give to those who ask Him the power of resistance, and the devil will flee discomfited. There is an immediate response to every soul who, fainting in the conflict, cries, "In the hour of temptation, good Lord, deliver me."

Nor is the hour of temptation altogether an hour of darkness. "My brethren, count it all joy when

ye fall into divers temptations, knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience." It is a comfort to the soul "in heaviness through manifold temptations" to remember that temptation means only a "trial of faith." As steel is tried and proved with fiery tests before it is admitted as a weapon of proof; so the trial of our faith, being much more precious, must pass through the fierce ordeal, that it "might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."

Blessed art thou when thou art tried and proved ! I know thy heart's temptations, and I know the strength and grace thou needest to resist; for I was tempted with a fiercer fire than thou canst ever know, and in the strife I overcame as thou shalt overcome, if thou art faithful ! To the end endure, and I will give to thee a crown of life.

Lord, we beseech Thee, grant Thy people grace to withstand the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil, and with pure hearts and minds to follow Thee, the only God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

TENTH DAY.

“ I could not do without Thee,
O Saviour of the lost,
Whose precious blood redeemed me
At such tremendous cost.
Thy righteousness, thy pardon,
Thy precious blood must be
My only hope and comfort,
My glory and my plea.

“ I could not do without Thee,
I cannot stand alone ;
I have no strength or goodness,
No wisdom of my own ;
But Thou, beloved Saviour,
Art all in all to me,
And weakness will be power
By leaning hard on Thee.”

“ He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.”—JOHN viii. 7.

A CROWD of fierce, unmerciful accusers ; a trembling, guilty woman ; a silent, sinless Judge ! The picture is stamped indelibly upon our minds.

The lesson which Christ here taught is not that sin may be weakly condoned. He knew that no spirit of holy justice animated those angry witnesses ; they had no desire to see wrong punished and right established ; they hoped merely to find an oppor-

tunity of proving Him to be wanting in the law of Moses. “This they said tempting Him, that they might have to accuse Him.” And Christ, with His unerring knowledge of the human heart, unmasks their design, and convicts them, not by arguments, but by the power of conscience.

“He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.” And they that heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last ; and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.” Surely this Man must be divine, who, with one swift word, could flash conviction home to the unwilling hearts of His hearers ! They gladly left Him to deal with the sinner alone, that they might escape from His all-seeing gaze. Not one soul stood sinless before the eyes of the Judge.

This conscience, or knowledge of the law of God, is a power implanted by God in every human heart. Even the heathen, which have not the written law, have an inner sense of that which is right, “their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another.” All know this power, this inward voice, warning and accusing us of sin. Things long since buried in the deep of the heart are not forgotten by this remorseless monitor ; at night, when all is still, and the world no longer holds its sway over us, sins that we would gladly forget rise up before our memory

with a power that we cannot resist. Too often we silence the voice and trifle with its warnings, but none can say that they have been left altogether unhindered in the way of wickedness.

And yet conscience is not an infallible guide. It is implanted by God, but we neglect it; we weaken it by every means in our power; we persuade ourselves against it, and even persuade conscience to uphold us in our wrong-doing. St. Paul was a conscientious man when he shut up the saints in prison, and "punished them oft in every synagogue." "I verily thought within myself that I *ought* to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth."

Brutus persuaded himself that he ought to kill Julius Cæsar. Though he shrank from the dreadful deed, he forced himself to do it, believing that he was justified in slaying his best friend "for the good of Rome." It is fatally easy to persuade ourselves that a thing is right when it agrees with our own wishes. Even the heathen had a knowledge of this truth. Socrates, though he urges men to a wise self-government, tells them, notwithstanding, that the expression "self-mastery" is a foolish one; because to master yourself is to be slave to yourself, for both master and slave are the same person.

Is there, then, no true self-mastery? Thank God there is; to hand self over into the keeping of another and an unerring power!

Christ's blood can quiet the accusing conscience. He can strengthen the enfeebled conscience; He can cleanse the guilty conscience. By the merit of His death we can draw near to God, "in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience." Those who knew not the way of salvation yet realised that the conscience must find some help from outside to soothe its fiery stings. Æschylus, who embodies the pangs of remorse in the "Furies," tells us how, after pursuing Orestes with ruthless vengeance over land and sea, they sank at last to sleep in the temple of the gods!

Conscience is a God-given voice, but just because it is God-given we must never trust in it apart from God. All that we have partakes of our sinful nature, and "even our mind and conscience is defiled;" but "Christ hath offered Himself without spot to God, that He may purge our conscience from dead works to serve the living and true God."

Yes; thou hast heard a voice in days long past that warned thee of thy sin and counselled good; but thou hast shut thy heart against the sound, and taught thyself to say, "My will is right." Come unto Me; I am the truth, the way; 'tis I alone can pardon; I alone can lead thee on unfaltering, guard thy soul, keep thee from evil, and inspire the good.

O Lord, we beseech Thee mercifully to hear our prayers, and spare all those who confess their sins unto Thee; that they whose consciences by sin are accused, by Thy merciful pardon may be absolved, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

ELEVENTH DAY.

“ We wait for happiness through days and nights
Of waking dreams, sweet hopes, and trembling fears ;
The vision floats before us evermore,
And still within our yearning hearts we cry,
 Some day ! some day ! ”

“ Some day the love which is too much to bear
On earth, and oftentimes would fail and sink
Beneath its own sweet weight—both sweet and sad—
Shall lose itself in that Eternal Love
Where only human hearts may find their home,
 Some day ! some day ! ”

“ What seek ye ? ”—JOHN i. 38.

“ AGAIN, the next day after, John stood, and two of his disciples ; and looking upon Jesus as He walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God ! And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. Then Jesus turned and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye ? ”

The Lamb of God ! This, then, was He to whom the types had pointed day by day through centuries of time ; this, then, was that Messiah for whom all men were looking, towards whom all men’s hopes were yearning. The disciples heard John speak, and they followed Jesus.

This first recorded word of our Lord in the Gospel of St. John is a searching personal question. "What seek ye?" Is it from motives of mere curiosity that ye follow Me? Have ye heard that I must increase while your master decreases, and do ye wish to join the more popular cause? But by their answer the two disciples showed that they wanted nothing more nor less than the Messiah Himself, "They said unto Him, Rabbi, where dwellest Thou?" Where abidest Thou, Master? It is there that we would be; where Thou lodgest we will lodge, Thy people shall be our people, and Thy God our God.

All men seek something; our hearts go ever up and down in the earth "seeking rest and finding none;" "the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing." Whatever we seek, riches, pleasures, earthly advancement, there is still an unsatisfied craving; the soul, unconsciously or consciously, seeks after God. St. Augustine has beautifully said, "Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our heart is restless till it resteth in Thee."

"For as the waxing moon can take
The tidal waters in her wake,
And lead them round and round to break,
Obedient to her drawings dim;
So may the movements of His mind,
The first great Father of mankind,
Affect with answering movements blind,
And draw the souls that breathe by Him."

What does this search for God involve?
Ascetics teach us that to live the higher life, a

man must forsake his wife and children, give up his secular calling, and, as far as he can, disengage himself from the body. The experience of life shows us that this teaching is unpractical, and that if this "Great Renunciation" is the necessary condition of the higher life, only a limited few can attain to it. But Christ declared plainly that His gospel was addressed not to a limited few, but to the whole world; therefore we find no such restrictions with Him. He gives us one rule, and one alone, "Seek ye *first* the kingdom of God."

How comprehensive, how far-reaching this rule is, may not appear at first sight, but the more faithfully we try to follow it, the more fully shall we understand it. They who follow first the kingdom of God will find that they can afterwards engage in nothing with which its laws do not agree. "The kingdom of God is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost," and those whose hearts are evil, wrathful, and unloving cannot belong to it. There is no place for hypocrisy. The "What seek ye?" of Christ is as all-searching now as then; He reads our motives, and discerns with all-seeing eye whether our search is indeed prompted by love and longing for the promised Saviour.

The true search after God has no uncertain ending; the Saviour's promise is sure, "Seek, and ye shall find." He will answer to us, as He did of old to the disciples' question, "Come and see." To see Christ is to love Him and to follow Him. "He

that doeth evil hath not seen God." It is only to those who seek Him with their whole heart that He reveals Himself; but when He beholds the earnest longing, the thirsting for Him, "as in a dry land where no water is," then, "He satisfieth the longing soul." To see Christ is to love Him, and to love Him is to become like Him. What is love but to see the heart of another perfectly? Friends grow like one another by constant interchange of thought and feeling, and the believer becomes like Christ by constant communion with Him.

"And at last our eyes shall see Him!" No longer as in a glass darkly, but face to face; and at last we shall be perfectly conformed to His image; the veil of earth will be rent in twain, the mists of sin, and doubt, and darkness will be cleared away for ever, and "we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."

Oh, weary heart, longing and fainting heart, seeking through life for rest and finding none! Come thou to Me! I am thy God, thy Home; in Me thy soul shall find its true repose. I am thy hope's fulfilment; thou shalt find My long-sought love the crown of thy desire. Oh, rest thy heart in Mine; stay here thy quest, till, in the fulness of eternal day, thou shalt behold Me and be satisfied!

O Lord, who hast promised unto us by Thy well-beloved Son, saying, Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened

unto you ; so give now unto us that ask ; let us that seek find ; open the gate unto us that knock ; that we may enjoy Thy everlasting benediction, and may come to the eternal kingdom which Thou hast promised by Christ our Lord. Amen.

TWELFTH DAY.

“ Who shall ascend to the holy place
And stand on the holy hill?
Who shall the boundless realms of space
With shouts of rapture thrill ?

“ Not to the noble, nor to the strong,
The wealthy or the wise,
Is given a part in that angel-song,
That music of the skies.

“ The servants of the Lord are they,
The pure in heart and hand,
For whom the eternal bars give way,
The eternal gates expand !”

“ Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”—
MATT. v. 8.

How can we see God? No longer, as the Greeks of old, can we say, “ Sir, we would see Jesus.” He has ascended, and we are still upon earth. Where can we see Him, and how?

The Psalmist asked the same question, and he gives us an answer like the answer of Christ. “ Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord, or who shall stand in His holy place? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart !” “ Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God !”

Perhaps we have known what Christ is to others. We have heard of His consolation in trouble, His guidance in difficulty, His pardon in sin, and now we say, Lord, we too would see Thee; but how is it that we cannot already see Thee? What powers have these hearts that we do not possess? What is the meaning of that strange saying, "Yet a little while, and the world seeth Me no more, but ye see Me?"

As an artist looking at a landscape sees beauties there which are hidden from the untrained eye, so the Christian looking upon life sees God there, though He be hidden from those who will not follow Him. But how shall we attain this knowledge? How shall we remove the scales from our eyes? There is but one way. He that is pure in heart shall see God!

But how can we become pure? Evil thoughts, evil desires, evil in every form and shape clings around us day by day. How can we become cleansed from the stains of earth? Not by any power of our own, but only by crying from the depths of the heart, "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."

But once washed, we shall be defiled again as we go on our way through the world. Is there daily purification? "He that hath this hope in Christ purifies, and goes on purifying himself."

But what harm will happen to us if we go on as we are? Is purity the only secret of joy and peace? One day the final fiat will go forth, "He that is filthy, let him be filthy still!"

We are not truly seeking to see God if we are not

prepared to give up sin. How can the sun shine in through uncleansed windows; and how can God reveal Himself to the soul, unless it be purified and made white in the blood of Christ? There are some who say that they admire sin—these shall never see God!

Tennyson, in his "Idylls of the King," has brought this lesson home to our hearts. The vision of the Holy Grail is possible not to the strong, the gallant, or the glorious, but only to the pure.

" My strength is as the strength of ten
Because my heart is pure ! "

Purity is strength, though in the eyes of scoffers it may appear weakness. And purity is also beauty and glory. Guinevere, the guilty queen, grows weary of the stainless Arthur, and longs for the passionate grace of Lancelot; in other words, she wearies of purity, and turns to the fascinations of sin. But at the last she discovers her mistake.

" I thought I could not breathe in that fine air,
That pure severity of perfect light—
I wanted warmth and colour, which I found
In Lancelot; now I see thee what thou art,
Thou art the highest and most human too,
Not Lancelot, nor another ! "

The life-struggle of the soul is depicted in these words. There is a fascination in sin that seizes upon our fancy. Daring and high spirit please us better than meekness and holiness of heart; self-

pleasing and voluptuous ease are sweeter to the taste than a stern and all-embracing self-denial. Sin is alluring, sin is enchanting, with its thousand-coloured fascinations, but *the pure in heart shall see God!*

Oh! pure in heart, holy and pure in heart! True life, true love, true joy are ever thine. Fear not though tempests rise and life be dark, though storms assail thee and though winds be loud, for thou shalt see Me ever, night and day, moving before thee, pointing thee on high. Oh! pure in heart, holy and pure in heart! Fear not though Death himself should wrap thee round; Death only leads to fuller life, where thou shalt be made pure with perfect purity.

O God, whose blessed Son was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil, and make us the sons of God and heirs of eternal life, grant us, we beseech Thee, that, having this hope, we may purify ourselves, even as He is pure; that, when He shall appear again with power and great glory, we may be made like unto Him in His eternal and glorious kingdom; where with Thee, O Father, and Thee, O Holy Ghost, He liveth and reigneth, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

THIRTEENTH DAY.

“ With tearful eyes I look around,
Life seems a dark and stormy sea ;
Yet 'midst the gloom I hear a sound,
A heavenly whisper, ‘Come to Me !’

“ It tells me of a place of rest,
It tells me where my soul may flee :
Oh ! to the weary, faint, opprest,
How sweet the bidding, ‘Come to Me !’

“ Come ! for all else must fail and die,
Earth is no resting-place for thee ;
To heaven direct thy weeping eye,
I am thy portion, ‘Come to Me !’”

“ Come unto Me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”—MATT. xi. 28.

WELL may we faint sometimes in the struggle of life ! Work unrequited, love unreturned, words misunderstood, deeds misrepresented—is not this too often our earthly lot ? There is no man, woman, or child who ever lived who has not at some time or other longed for rest. The birds have time to sing, the flowers have time to bloom, the sun shines

and knows no sorrow ; why is our lot labour and sadness ?

" Why are we weighed upon with heaviness,
And utterly consumed with sharp distress,
While all things else have rest from weariness ?
All things have rest ; why should we toil alone,
We only toil, who are the first of things,
And make perpetual moan,
Still from one sorrow to another thrown :
Nor ever fold our wings,
And cease from wanderings,
Nor steep our brows in slumber's holy balm ;
Nor hearken what the inner spirit sings,
There is no joy, but calm !
Why should we only toil, the roof and crown of things ? "

It is in hours like these, when the heart grows weary and utterly fails, that we hear the voice of Christ saying, " Come unto Me, all ye that are weary, and I will give you rest."

There are some who, when they have experienced the rest of sins forgiven, imagine that they can look for no other rest on earth, but must endure fighting and sorrow and fear until they reach the land " where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest." This is not the teaching of the Bible. " We which have believed *do* enter into rest." Why do we not make use of our privileges as we might ? Christ has given us an open invitation : " Come unto Me, and I will give you rest." He limits it with no restrictions and no conditions. Come unto Me, believing that I have almighty

power, and I will give you rest. How terribly we wound Christ when we doubt His willingness to relieve us! We can perhaps understand that He is ready to give us rest from the burden of sin, for it was to save us from sin that He came down from heaven, but can it be possible that we may cast upon Him the burden of daily life? May we come to Him in our little worries and difficulties, when we are wearied and overwhelmed with work, ruffled and irritated with disappointments, may we come to Christ *then* and ask for rest? To doubt His word is to deny Him!

How different our lives would be if in all the troubles and discomforts that, small as they may appear to others, yet weigh down upon our souls, we would remember the Divine promise which has power to shed brightness over our lives.

“If our love were but more simple
We should take Him at His word,
And our lives would be all sunshine
In the sweetness of our Lord !”

But some may say, How is it that those who truly love and follow Christ have yet their full share of this world’s sorrows? If they go to Christ for rest, how is it that we see them still suffering, still troubled, still toiling, and, it may be, receiving little reward? But Christ has never promised that His people shall have unclouded happiness, freedom from sickness and disappointment, or unvarying success. What He promises to them is *rest*. There

would be no need for rest in our lives if there were no weariness. In heaven we shall "rest not day nor night," for there labour will have become service, and the feebleness of life on earth be exchanged for eternal joy and strength. We need rest on earth because we must go through the experiences and discipline of earth, and when "fearfulness and trembling have overwhelmed us," so that we cry, "Oh! that I had wings like a dove, for then would I flee away and be at rest," we hear the Divine answer, "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest."

We should not fear the troubles of life if we could once assure ourselves that through them all we could preserve a calm and peaceful heart. It is this, and no less, that is Christ's promise to His people.

And to those who are struggling after purity of heart, who are cast down because of the ceaseless conflict with sin, the voice of Christ makes invitation, "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest." Striving in our own strength, even though it be with earnest endeavour, we cannot fail to grow weary; but resting on the grace and power of God, we "shall mount up with wings as eagles, we shall walk and not faint."

And dost thou long for rest, poor fainting dove, beating earth's waves with wandering, weary wings? I am thine Ark; fly to My sheltering love, and I will stretch My hand and take thee in. I will refresh thee; with new stores of grace, strengthen thy soul

and nerve thy drooping life. Oh ! fear not, tremble not, sink not in dread, but hear thy Saviour's voice above the storm, "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest."

O God, from whom all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works do proceed, give unto Thy servants that peace which the world cannot give, that both our hearts may be set to obey Thy commandments, and also that by Thee we being defended from the fear of our enemies may pass our time in rest and quietness, through the merits of Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen.

FOURTEENTH DAY.

“ And wilt Thou hear the fevered heart
To Thee in silence cry?
And as th’ incessant wildfires dart
Out of the restless eye,
Wilt Thou forgive the wayward thought,
By kindly woes yet half untaught,
A Saviour’s right, so dearly bought,
That Hope should never die ?

“ Thou wilt be there, and not forsake
To turn the bitter pool
Into a bright and breezy lake,
The throbbing brow to cool :
Till left awhile with Thee alone
The wilful heart be fain to own
That He, by whom our bright hours shone,
Our darkness best may rule.”

“ Wheresoever the body is, there will the eagles be gathered together.”—LUKE xvii. 37.

“ WHERE, Lord, shall the judgment be ? ” asked the disciples ; and Christ, in reply, flashes a vivid picture before their eyes in a few brief words. It is the wide wilderness of sand, and a caravan passes slowly over the barren waste. Suddenly one of the

beasts of burden falls exhausted by the way, and, removing its load, the drivers pass on into the distance, leaving it alone to die. The sky is clear above, but far away in the dim horizon dark specks may be seen, coming from all sides, wheeling nearer and nearer, flocking together with hoarse expectant cries, hovering over the still breathing form, until, the moment that life expires, they swoop down upon their far-scented prey.

Such is the judgment !

Wherever sin is, though it be hidden from the eyes of men, and be laid secretly out of sight—where sin is, there judgment will also be found. Retribution is one of the unchangeable laws of the world. If we sin we must suffer. “Behold, ye have sinned against the Lord, and be sure your sin will find you out.”

But does not this doctrine do away with our trust in Christ’s salvation ? If He has indeed suffered for us, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us unto God, if our iniquities are cast out of God’s sight and buried as in the depths of the sea, what room is there for retribution ?

Christ has indeed suffered for us, and by His death hath given unto us eternal life ; but we must suffer for our sins that we may learn to avoid sin. “Though I made you sorry, I do not repent,” writes St. Paul to the Corinthian Christians ; “I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance : for godly sorrow worketh repentance

to salvation not to be repented of." It is good for us that we should be afflicted, and the all-loving Father chastens and corrects His children that they may learn the true repentance that leads to holiness and peace. God's severest punishment is ceasing to punish. "Ephraim is joined to idols, *let him alone.*" Let him alone; he shall no longer be son of mine; I will not lead him in the way, nor correct him when he wanders; unchecked he shall go on in the road of destruction, and the end thereof is death! The child cries to its father, Father, punish me, rebuke me; but cast me not off from thee; leave me not, turn not from me in silence and despair!

Bodily pain is our bodily safeguard. We fall and hurt ourselves, and therefore we are watchful not to fall again. If pain were not present to restrain us, we should wound our bodies, careless and unheeding. So is it with our souls. If retribution did not follow sin, if remorse with its iron tooth did not seize upon our hearts, we should go on sinning without realising what we were doing, and injure our souls beyond repair. We sow sin, and we reap sorrow—the one is a natural consequence of the other; and the more we see of life the more earnestly we thank God that this is His unchangeable law. It is no sign of His wrath, but rather of His almighty love, for by chastening He "dealeth with us as with sons," and chastens us only for our profit, "that we might bring forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness."

And thou hast sinned, My child, fallen and sinned ; and thou must suffer, suffer deep and long. Yet weep not nor despair, it is My love that chastens and corrects thee, not My wrath. Did I not love thou shouldst go on unchecked ; but I have suffered pain and death for thee, because I love thee ; and thy blood-bought soul, shall feel the bitter anguish of remorse, that thou mayest go in peace and sin no more.

O God, who chastenest the hearts of Thy faithful people to the intent that they may return into the way of righteousness, help us, we beseech Thee, so to repent our sins, that the rest of our life hereafter may be pure and holy, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

FIFTEENTH DAY.

“ O Jesus ! I have promised
 To serve Thee to the end ;
Be Thou for ever near me,
 My Master and my Friend !
I shall not fear the battle,
 If Thou art by my side ;
Nor wander from the pathway,
 If Thou wilt be my guide.

“ O Jesus ! Thou has promised
 To all that follow Thee,
That where Thou art in glory,
 There shall Thy servant be.
And, Jesus ! I have promised,
 To serve Thee to the end ;
Oh ! give me grace to follow
 My Master and my Friend ! ”

“ She hath done what she could.”—MARK xiv. 8.

THERE are two ways of interpreting this expression. How often we hear it said in speaking of help given, Well, they did what they *could*—with the implied conclusion, after all it was not much ! This is not the way in which Christ used it. He states here that the woman who showed her love by anointing Him with precious ointment had done all that it was in her power to do ; that is to say, she had served up to the full measure of her capacity.

Taken in this sense the words are a proof of our

Lord's divinity, for who else can absolutely measure the human powers ? Half our troubles in life come from the fact that more is expected from us than we are able to perform, and after our best efforts we leave our fellow-men dissatisfied. Who can gauge another's difficulties, or estimate his temptations, or make allowance for his hindrances and troubles ? It is often no want of sympathy that prevents us, but a mere want of knowledge.

“Not e'en the dearest heart and next our own
Knows half the reasons why we smile or sigh.”

But Christ “needed not that any should testify of man, for He knew what was in man.” All the depths of each human heart lay bare before Him ; there is no need for us to plead our weakness and frailty to Him, for “He knoweth our frame, He remembereth that we are dust.” He estimates our powers, He makes allowance for our weakness, He gives us as many opportunities as we can use, and no more. He never overtasks our strength. Oh ! gracious Master, Thy yoke is easy, and Thy burden is light ; the world makes ever more and more painful demands upon its slaves ; but Thou, in Thine infinite wisdom and compassion, dost expect no more of Thy servants than they are able to perform !

But there is another side to this truth.

If the Divine Master can thus read our hearts, we must not look for praise that we do not deserve.

With our imperfect human knowledge, the vile person is often called liberal, and the churl said to be bountiful. We cannot read the motives of others any more than we can understand their difficulties, and we are able to delude ourselves and each other as to our work for God. Milton tells us in "Paradise Lost" of the angel Ithuriel, who was said to carry a spear by which he could compel whatever he touched with it to assume its true shape. With such an unerring touch our Lord reveals the poverty and hollowness of our boasted good deeds; He weighs them too often in the balance and finds them wanting. The people in the Temple looked with admiration on the rich men who cast much into the treasury, and took but slight notice of the poor widow with her paltry offering; but Christ, in one of His brief, burning sentences, showed the true relative value of the gifts. "Of a truth, I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all; for all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God, but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she hath."

There is one more lesson that we learn from these words. Christ, who knows if His people have done all that they were able to do, knows also if they have left undone what they might have done for Him. There is a wonderful poem which shows us as in a vision how the haunting memories of lost opportunities will vex and disturb our souls.

“ The blind and the cripple were there,
And the babe that pined for bread,
And the houseless man and the widow poor,
Who begged to bury the dead ;
The naked, alas, that I might have clad,
The famished I might have fed !

“ The wounds I might have healed !
The human sorrow and smart !
And yet it was never in my soul
To play so ill a part !
But evil is wrought by want of thought
As well as want of heart.”

It is useless to excuse ourselves by saying, What can I do for Christ? He claims our whole lives for His service. “ Whosoever ye do, whether ye eat or drink, do all to the glory of God.” Each act, each deed of daily life is no longer secular, but becomes holy and sacred when it is done unto God and not unto men.

But we need also some special work for Christ, and perhaps we persuade ourselves that if we might follow as the disciples followed Him of old we would serve with our whole hearts and lives. Lord, we cry, we would have served Thee, but we had no opportunity. When saw we Thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison? And He will answer, “ Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of the least of these, ye did it not unto Me. Depart from Me, ye cursed.”

Yea, I can read the heart that I have made, I know its troubles, I can weigh its powers; with Mine unerring eye I scan thy work and see what

thou hast done and left undone. Yet tremble not, though I am thus all-wise, I am not less all-loving ; thou shalt find the sentence passed by Justice and by Truth, kinder than that of blinding ignorance.

Almighty God, of whose only gift it cometh that Thy faithful people do unto Thee true and laudable service, grant, we beseech Thee, that we may so faithfully serve Thee in this life, that we fail not finally to attain Thy heavenly promises, through the merits of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

SIXTEENTH DAY.

“Lord, speak to me, that I may speak
In living echoes of Thy tone ;
As Thou hast sought, so let me seek
Thy erring children, lost and lone.

“Oh lead me, Lord, that I may lead
The wandering and the wavering feet ;
Oh feed me, Lord, that I may feed
Thy hungering ones with manna sweet.

“Oh teach me, Lord, that I may teach
The precious things Thou dost impart ;
And wing my words that they may reach
The hidden depths of many a heart.

“Oh fill me with Thy fulness, Lord,
Until my very heart o'erflow
In kindling thought and glowing word
Thy love to tell, thy praise to show.”

“Without Me ye can do nothing.”—JOHN xv. 5.

How many of us make resolutions to do good in the world, and fail ! There is nothing much sadder than to look back upon the path of life to the bright hopes and earnest desires that illuminated its beginning. Few, who think at all, do not resolve to do something worth living for, to make their career

noble and useful in the world. We determine it, and we set out upon our way, but gradually, as the cares and pleasures of life grow and increase upon us, our resolutions are choked, and we end with a sense of good left undone and a mission unfulfilled.

It is not so with all, thank God for it; but many a heart could tell such a tale as this if it would!

Is there any power that can nerve us for the struggle of life; that can inspire us with the grace and strength necessary to keep our good resolves alive in our hearts, and to make them bring forth fruit to God and man? Christ tells us of such a power in these words; it is His presence alone that can enable us to make our lives in any sense what they should be—“ Apart from Me ye can do nothing.”

The disciples were at the threshold of their career; their Master was about to leave them to the work that He had given them to do; they were to go forth into all the world to preach the Gospel, and show the glory of God by their good works; and seeing the earnest looking forward, the resolution and the hope that were filling their hearts, He gives them a reminder of their own weakness—“ Without Me ye can do nothing.” How often must these words have come back upon their hearts as they met the discouragements and disappointments of the way; in their own strength they were power-

less, united to Christ they were strong with an irresistible strength. We find the echo of the thought again and again. St. Paul says, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me;" St. John, "Ye have overcome, because greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world;" and St. Peter, in words that are borrowed from his Master's last discourse, tells us that holiness and virtue must be planted in us by "Jesus our Lord," that they may "make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful."

Christ in this passage uses the illustration of a vine; the severed branch is useless and fruitless, it is only so long as it remains joined to the stem that it can draw up its strength and nourishment. It is no glory of its own if it bear much fruit, for no power of its own would be sufficient to produce it. It is not much wonder that there are many who reject this doctrine! We like to feel that our good deeds spring from the goodness of our own hearts, that we are able to stand upright in our own strength; we do not wish to be "beholden" to another.

The trouble all comes from want of love for Christ. We are never too proud to lean on those we love; we are willing to accept their aid and rejoice in their tender care and protection. If we love Christ we shall lean upon Him, draw our strength from Him, and find our sweetest joy in the fact

that the glory of our good deeds will be laid at His feet.

But there are others who say, Do these profess to be united to Christ, and is this all the good that they are able to perform ? I cannot believe in such a religion.

Yet who would say, if they met a weak and starving human being, Is this a man who professes to eat and drink ? I cannot believe in food if it produces such a feeble result ! In things of this life we exercise our common sense : the feeble we counsel to take more nourishment, the starving we help to procure it. It is only in the "things that belong unto our peace" that we are content with blind and ignorant conclusions. Oh ! heavenly source of strength, Divine Saviour, that watchest day and night that Thou mayest be gracious to Thy people, how patiently Thou bearest with our follies, how gently Thou leadest us through our difficulties, with what almighty power Thou nervest our hearts to do Thy work in the world !

And art thou weak, my child ? Is all thy work tending to failure ? Shrink not from Me thus ; if thou hadst lived but closer to My side, thy work had been accomplished ! Come, draw nigh ; leaning upon My heart, kept by My love, thou canst do all things in My power and strength.

O God, the strength of all them that put their trust in Thee, mercifully accept our prayers ; and

because through the weakness of our mortal nature we can do no good thing without Thee, grant us the help of Thy grace, that in keeping of Thy commandments we may please Thee both in will and deed, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

SEVENTEENTH DAY.

“ How blessed from the bonds of sin
And earthly fetters free,
In singleness of heart and aim
Thy servant, Lord, to be ;
The hardest toil to undertake
With joy at Thy command,
The meanest office to receive
With meekness at Thy hand.

“ Thus may I serve Thee, gracious Lord ;
Thus ever Thine alone,
My soul and body given to Thee
The purchase Thou hast won.
Through evil or through good report
Still keeping by Thy side ;
By life or death in this poor flesh
Let Christ be magnified.”

“ He that is not with Me is against Me.”—MATT. xii. 30.

WE often talk of “ half-hearted Christians,” but the expression seems a contradiction when looked at in the light of this saying of Christ’s. He who does not follow wholly, who does not give himself up heart and soul to the service of the Master, is not worthy of the name of disciple.

Our Lord evidently did not mean to imply that those who in trying to follow Him stumble some-

times, or even fall, are not His disciples. Thomas doubted ; Peter denied Him ; John, that beloved disciple, would have called down fire from heaven in his anger ; yet these were all His true followers.

Nor did He mean that only those who give up their earthly calling and devote their lives to preaching and teaching the word can be called disciples. Mary and Martha abode still in their brother's house, St. Luke pursued his work as a physician, Joseph of Arimathea did not resign his place at the council board ; yet all these were counted among the number of His chosen ones.

What is the lesson, then, that Christ would have us learn ? Is it not the old lesson that we learn from the Psalmist's prayer, "Unite our hearts to fear Thy name" ? A divided heart can never truly serve God. "A kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and a house divided against itself shall not stand." If we would call ourselves by the Master's sacred name we must once and for all "renounce the world, the flesh, and the devil." A half-hearted service can bring forth no good results—the term in itself implies that there are two masters. If only half our powers, half our energies, half our hearts and lives are devoted to God, to whom is the remainder given ? God will accept no divided allegiance. Our duty towards God is to love Him with all our heart, with all our mind, with all our soul, and with all our strength. This is the first and great commandment !

If we thus give up our whole hearts to God, we must of necessity offer ourselves a living sacrifice to Him. In our own work, in our own place, we have each a service to render unto the Master in heaven—a service that must for ever remain undone if we neglect to do it. Whatever our gift may be, whether ministering, or teaching, or learning, or giving, or ruling, or serving, let us do it cheerfully and with diligence, that all men may see whose we are and whom we serve. Many people complain that they have "no definite work for God;" and are therefore compelled to hide the light that they would gladly show for Him under the trivial and wearisome duties of everyday life. But the Bible teaches us throughout that these daily duties are in themselves a definite work for God. Were not Joseph the statesman, David the king, Nehemiah the cupbearer, or Amos the herdsman as truly servants of God as Aaron the priest, or Elijah the prophet? Of each of us it is required that we shall do our own work, not the work of another.

But if we refuse to do our work, whatever it may be, we call down God's wrath upon us.

"Curse ye Meroz," said the angel of the Lord; "curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof." Why should Meroz be cursed; what had the city done that God's anger should be called down upon its people? Meroz had done nothing, and therefore it was cursed, "because it came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the

mighty." The people of Meroz had put the whole cause in danger by their indifference ; by holding back they were in reality fighting against the armies of God, though they never stirred out of their city or laid hand to their weapons ! And is it not so with us ? If we by word, by example, by our whole lives, are not upholding Christ's name in the world, we must be counted in the ranks of His enemies.

There is no condition so miserable as one of doubt and hesitation ; when we have made up our minds to any course of action half its difficulty is over at once. It is the heart at war with itself that knows no happiness, no rest. To acknowledge Christ's claims, and yet not to serve Him, is to lay up for ourselves a sure harvest of misery ; to serve Him, and yet to devote a part of our lives to the cause of His enemies, is to make our hearts a battle-field of unending and agonised dissensions. It is those who seek Him with their whole heart that God calls "blessed," and it is when we are fully consecrated, or set apart for His service, that we advance day by day towards that state of holiness in which lies the happiness of the human heart.

I gave My all for thee, I nought withheld that I might make thee Mine ! Why wilt thou keep some poor reserve from Me ? I claim thy all, thy heart, thy powers, thy love, thy life itself ; if thou wouldest be My servant, bring them all and lay them at My feet, lest in that day when hearts and lives lie bare before My throne, ye hear My voice declare

in accents stern, I never knew thee, for thou wert
not Mine !

Almighty God, help us, we beseech Thee, to love Thee with all our heart, with all our mind, with all our soul, and with all our strength, that we may continue Thine for ever, and daily increase in Thy Holy Spirit more and more until we come to Thy everlasting kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

EIGHTEENTH DAY.

“ We do not see our Teacher’s face,
We do not hear His voice ;
And yet we know that He is near,
We feel it and rejoice.

There is a music round our hearts
Set in no mortal key ;
There is a presence with our souls,
We know that it is He.

“ His loving teaching cannot fail,
And we shall know at last
Each task that seemed so hard and strange,
When learning time is past.
Oh ! may we learn to love Him more
By every opening page,
By every lesson He shall mark
With daily ripening age.”

“ Learn of Me ; for I am meek and lowly in heart : and ye shall find rest unto your souls.”—MATT. xi. 29.

IF this injunction had been given by any other than God Himself, our minds would have revolted from it. Its acceptance is a proof of Christ’s divinity. The very best and noblest of this world’s heroes could not, if they wished to keep our respect and admiration, point boldly to their own lives and say, Take my life in all things as your pattern, copy me and learn of me, and you will find rest

to your souls. But, spoken by God, the words rouse nothing in our minds but awe and love ; the spotless One, the holy One, the Lord of life and glory —we are content to follow Him in all things.

And yet, though we accept the words, how few of us carry them out in our lives ! When we compare Christians with their Master, we see how little of His spirit rules in their hearts. It has been said, and there is truth in the bitter words, that the only real argument against Christianity is found in the lives of its followers ! When we see the animosity, the self-seeking, the uncontrolled passions that exist among those who profess to be servants of Christ, we can understand the sneers of the world. Yet, sad as the reflection is, its only result should be to drive us back to our Saviour's feet. If men taunt us with our unlikeness to Christ, it should not shake our faith in Him, but rather help us to strive to learn more and more of His holiness and grace.

St. Paul echoes back the words that had helped to mould his own life, and telling the Ephesians of the works of the heathen, he says, "But ye have not so learned Christ." Then skilfully wheeling round his attack, he turns upon the converts themselves, and pours out a vehement flood of words that may well cause some of us to blush in the present day—How *have* ye learned Christ ? Ye say that ye have learnt Him, but what are your lives ? If ye have indeed been taught by Him, ye have put off lying, the desires and passions of the sinful

heart, anger, stealing, uncharitableness, foolish talking, bitterness, wrath, clamour, evil-speaking, and malice ! A searching test indeed, and one which if fully applied has power to make us ask ourselves, *Have I indeed learned Christ ?*

But learning is not an equally easy matter to all. To some the opportunities of knowledge are impossible of reach ; to be a student requires time and money ; and there are many who, with the sincerest desire for knowledge, can yet never attain it ! Is it so with the Divine knowledge of which Christ speaks ?

In beginning the study of a difficult subject the first thing we require is a teacher who will be able to explain what we cannot understand. Such a teacher of holiness is provided for us by God. "The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things." But some are poor and cannot afford a teacher, or they are far away and cannot procure his aid ; can we be sure of the help of this Divine Teacher ? Yes ; for "your Heavenly Father shall *give* the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him." The Example is provided, the lesson is ready, the Teacher is willing ; surely it is our own fault if we will not learn !

We must remember that men will believe in our Christianity not because we claim Christ as our Master, but because our lives show the result of His teaching. If any one delights us with their

singing, we judge that they have learnt music ; if they tell us wonderful things of the past ages of the world, we know that they are students of history. Even so will it be with us. " By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples," said the Master, " if ye have love one to another."

It is not always easy to learn ; school-time is often a hard time for scholar and for teacher too. But school-time will not last for ever. One day we shall have learnt our lesson perfectly ; one day the gates of the heavenly home will stand open to receive us, and we shall hear the voice of Christ Himself, as He welcomes us to our Father's house on high.

Yes ; learn of Me. Learn patience through your pain, meekness through trouble, gentleness through wrong ; learn joy through sorrow, peace through storm and strife, till all the world, seeing your holy lives, shall say—These have been taught at Jesus' feet.

Almighty and everlasting God, who of Thy tender love toward mankind hast sent Thy Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, to take upon Him our flesh, and to suffer death upon the Cross, that all mankind should follow the example of His great humility, mercifully grant that we may both follow the example of His patience, and also be made partakers of His resurrection, through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

NINETEENTH DAY.

“ Jesus, Thou joy of loving hearts !
Thou Fount of life ! Thou Light of men !
From the best bliss that earth imparts
We turn unfilled to Thee again.

“ We taste Thee, O Thou living Bread !
And long to feast upon Thee still ;
We drink of Thee, the Fountain Head,
And thirst our souls from Thee to fill.

“ Our restless spirits yearn for Thee
Where'er our changeful lot is cast ;
Glad, when Thy precious smile we see ;
Blest, when our faith can hold Thee fast.

“ O Jesus ! ever with us stay ;
Make all our moments calm and bright ;
Chase the dark night of sin away ;
Shed o'er the world Thy holy light !”

“ Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.”—MATT. v. 6.

THE Beatitudes, which are the first recorded utterances of Christ's ministry, have a special interest when looked at in connection with the Magnificat. We may well believe that the song of praise of the Blessed among women, was often repeated by her in the hearing of the holy child Jesus, and it is a touching thought that in this, His first sermon, we

should be able to trace echoes of His mother's words. “He hath put down the mighty from their seats and exalted them of low degree.” “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” “He hath filled the hungry with good things.” “Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.”

This promise of food for the hungry in soul had long been a prophecy of Messiah's kingdom. “Ho, every one that thirsteth,” cries Isaiah, “come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.”

Who is there who has not at some time or other experienced this soul-hunger? It is our longing for that mysterious something which the Germans say is expressed in “the mystic word—*beyond* ;” something outside us, something greater, nobler, fuller, in which our nature may be satisfied. It is a longing which proves to us that man is immortal. If we had learnt nothing of the history of the lion, we should yet know by his restless pacing up and down his narrow cage, by his angry glance at the iron bars that confine him, that his true dwelling-place was the illimitable forest! So is it with the soul; though we cannot see whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth, we know by its yearning, restless cravings, that it was made for something beyond the limitations of its earthly lot!

But is it indeed *blessed* to hunger after something

that we have not got? Would it not be better to have no desires beyond the daily round of life, to be content with this world and seek for nothing further? Yes, at the time it *is* painful to hunger, it is hard to yearn and suffer and strive, but it is only those who hunger that shall be filled! There is a Bread of Life of which whosoever eateth shall never hunger more, a Water of Life of which whosoever drinketh shall never thirst again. If God had planted the need in the heart of man and left him without means of satisfying it, like Tantalus, who for ever thirsted without being able to reach a drop of water, we might indeed have charged Him with unkindness. But these desires and longings are His special messengers to call us to Himself. Do we hunger? He has made us to hunger that we might seek that Living Bread which is given for the life of the world.

Let us beware, then, how we try to stifle these God-given longings after an inward and abiding satisfaction. The philosophers of old taught their disciples that the only blessedness was in an utter indifference to all things. "Blessed is the man who desireth nothing, for so shall he find the quieting of pain"—this is what the teaching of Buddha conveys, in his "Doctrine of the Noble Path."

Far otherwise is the teaching of Christ. Blessed are they who suffer, who yearn for what they do not possess, who look for greater good than the

world can bestow ; for God will satisfy the longing soul, " He will give thee thy heart's desire ! "

Oh ! weep not that there is no power on earth to satisfy thy longing, fainting soul. These strong desires that rend thy heart in twain prove that thy heart is seeking for its God ; thy soul came forth from God, and none but God can still its restless beatings ; seek His face, and thou shalt find thy lifelong hunger filled ; in Him is righteousness, in Him is truth, and He shall make thee pure as He is pure.

O Almighty God, who madest man for Thyself, and for whom our hearts yearn ceaselessly that they may be satisfied, reveal Thyself unto us, we beseech Thee, in Him who is the Desire of all nations, Jesus Christ Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

TWENTIETH DAY.

“ Long did I toil, and knew no earthly rest,
Far did I rove, and found no certain home,
At last I sought them in His sheltering breast
Who lifts His voice and bids the weary come.
With Him I found a home, a rest divine,
And I since then am His and He is mine.

“ The good I have is from His stores supplied ;
The ill is only what He deems the best ;
Him for my Friend, I’m rich with nought beside,
And poor without Him though of all possessed
Changes may come—I take or I resign,
Content, while I am His and He is mine.”

“ *Abide in Me, and I in you.*”—JOHN xv. 4.

CHRIST having told His disciples that they must dwell in Him as the branches in the vine if they would bring forth fruit, changes to the other side of the thought, and tells them that unless He also dwells in them their life is not complete. Christ must dwell in our hearts by faith if we would know the love of God. It is this blessed communion that makes the happiness of the Christian life, the certainty that a Friend is always at hand, ready and willing to aid, sympathising in all our griefs and difficulties, gentle, tender, true and strong.

How many call themselves Christians, yet never hold this communion with Christ! We are never so happy as when we are dwelling under the same roof with those that we love best on earth; but though we profess to love Christ, we too often keep Him outside the door of the heart. Yet who among all our earthly friends can ever be to us what He is able and willing to be? How often we go to those we love with some sorrow or some joy, and find them too engrossed with their own affairs to listen to our tale; or we tell them, and they misunderstand us, and we are wounded and thrown back upon ourselves. Not so with Christ. He is always interested, He always understands, His grace is always sufficient for our time of need.

We know well enough how the presence of the one our hearts love best, throws a halo over the darkest and most troublous scenes; the presence of Christ in our lives will make the hardest duties light, touch the saddest hours with joy.

But how can we thus dwell with Christ and Christ with us? The form of words is familiar; but is it a practical possibility, and not a mere poetical idea? A wise man of old once gave his friends a short method by which he had attained to this presence of God in his life; his words were simple, but they contained the key to true communion: "Think of God the most you can." At first hearing we might almost pass them by

as too obvious to need attention, but when we examine them we are forced to own how different our daily practice is to their teaching. Who among us thinks of God the most he can? Do we not rather think of God the *least* we can? Do we not put Him out of our minds except when we are absolutely compelled to think of Him; or remember Him for a few moments night and morning, that we may feel free to forget Him all through the day?

In business, as in prayer, we should cultivate the presence of God; if we continually turn our minds towards Him we shall find at last that He is continually present with us.

Nothing in life is ever done without practice, and the holiest things need practice as well as the commonest and most ordinary. We must not be discouraged if we find this constant turning to God difficult, but we must make it the hourly habit of our lives until it becomes familiar and natural.

No one who has any love for God as a Father, for Christ as a Saviour, can doubt the blessedness of this heart-communion. It is the source of rest: "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." It is the source of safety: "Thou shalt hide them in the secret of Thy presence." It is the source of comfort: "In Thy presence is salvation." It is the source of happiness: "In Thy presence is fulness of joy."

Open thy heart, My child, and let Me in ; I am thy Saviour, thy Almighty Friend ; there is no thought, no hope, but wins My care. Tell Me thy all, My love is deep and strong ; trust Me, and day by day and hour by hour I will abide in thee and mould thy will, guide all thy life ; till in My Heaven above, thou shalt be one with Me and I with thee.

O Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in Heaven and earth is named, grant us, we beseech Thee, according to the riches of Thy glory, to be strengthened with might by Thy Spirit in the inner man ; that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith, that we, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length, and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that we may be filled with all the fulness of God ! Amen.

TWENTY-FIRST DAY.

“ To Calvary, Lord ! in spirit now
Our weary souls repair,
To dwell upon Thy dying love,
And taste its sweetness there.

“ Sweet resting-place of every heart,
That feels the plague of sin,
Yet knows the deep mysterious joy
Of peace with God within.

“ There, through Thine hour of deepest woe
Thy suffering spirit passed ;
Grace there its wondrous victory gained,
And love endured its last.

“ Thou suffering Lamb ! Thy bleeding wounds
With cords of love divine,
Have drawn our willing hearts to Thee
And linked our lives with Thine.”

“ He that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, dwelleth in
Me, and I in Him.”—JOHN vi. 56.

It is useless for us to acknowledge the beauty of Christ’s life and character without also accepting His sacrifice for sin. There are many in the present day who urge us to follow the example of Christ, who remind us that as He went about doing good, so we should try to devote our lives to the service of our fellow-men, and who yet deny that His

death has any power in the world except as a model of self-sacrifice.

But our Lord here distinctly states that if we would dwell in Him and He in us, it can only be by virtue of His atoning death. "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you." Multitudes have been offended because of this saying ; it is hard to consent to the truth that "without shedding of blood is no remission of sins." Cain refused to offer the appointed sacrifice, and brought to God the fruit and flowers of the earth, acknowledging Him as Creator and rejecting Him as Redeemer, and his sin is repeated in every age and generation. We bring to God our good deeds, and offer them up to Him, forgetting that our very tears need washing and our repentance repenting of. Shakespeare understood this truth, for he makes his hero, King Henry V., close the list of his good deeds with these memorable words—

" Yet all that I can do is nothing worth,
Since that my penitence comes after all
Imploring pardon."

"He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood dwelleth in Me, and I in him." "From that time," we are told, "many of His disciples went back and walked no more with Him." They had been willing to follow Him as long as they could join in His acts of charity and benevolence, as long

as they could worship with Him in the synagogue and listen to His holy precepts, but when they found that something more was required of them, that they were not only to imitate His righteousness, but to plead that righteousness and not their own before the throne of God, they went back and walked no more with Him.

There are only too many to-day who are following their example ; they profess to be ready to obey Christ's teaching, but they forget that the Saviour who commanded us to love our enemies, to feed the hungry, and heal the sick, also instituted, and in His holy Gospel commands us to continue, a perpetual memory of His full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world. By making His death the central truth of the Christian religion, and commanding us to always remember His exceeding great love, thus dying for us, and the innumerable benefits which by His precious blood-shedding He hath ordained to us ; and by instituting holy mysteries whereby we spiritually eat the flesh of Christ and drink His blood, we dwell in Christ and Christ in us, we are one with Christ and Christ with us ; we are plainly taught that unless we appropriate the sacrifice of Christ—feed upon Him in our hearts by faith—we have no part in the kingdom of God.

But this great truth does not take away from the necessity of good works. Christianity does not deserve the sneer cast upon it, that its doctrines

teach men that it does not matter what they do as long as they believe in a vicarious sacrifice. The atonement of Christ is the groundwork of the Christian life, and the reason and motive for our good deeds. In the beautiful words of our Communion Service, as we return from partaking of the memorials of the dying Sacrifice of our only Lord and Saviour, “We offer a present unto Thee, O Lord, ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto Thee.” “If ye then be risen with Christ,” says St. Paul, if ye have died with Him upon the Cross, and are buried with Him in baptism, “mortify *therefore* your members which are upon the earth.” If ye are one with Christ and He with you, your lives will be free from anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, and lying.

As one of our old divines has well expressed it: we may distinguish between light and heat, but put out the flame, and both are gone; one cannot exist without the other. So is it with the Christian life. “The just shall live by faith,” faith in the all-atoning sacrifice of an Almighty Saviour, but “faith without works is dead.”

Believe in Me; I gave My life for Thee, and by My death thy soul alone can live; My flesh and blood alone can give thee strength; come unto Me, and find the source of life. Then, trusting in My righteousness alone, thou shalt go forth with grace that cannot fail, and live and work and conquer in My name.

Almighty God, who hast given Thine only Son to be unto us both a sacrifice for sin and also an ensample of godly life, give us grace that we may always most thankfully receive that His inestimable benefit, and also daily endeavour ourselves to follow the blessed steps of His most holy life, through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

TWENTY-SECOND DAY

“ ‘Take up thy cross,’ the Saviour said,
‘ If thou wouldst My disciple be ;
Deny thyself, the world forsake,
And humbly follow after Me.’

“ Take up thy cross, let not its weight
Fill thy weak spirit with alarm ;
His strength shall bear thy spirit up,
And brace thy heart and nerve thy arm.

“ Take up thy cross, nor heed the shame,
Nor let thy foolish pride rebel ;
Thy Lord for thee the cross endured
To save thy soul from death and hell.

“ Take up thy cross, and follow Christ,
Nor think till death to lay it down ;
For only he who bears the cross
May hope to wear the glorious crown.”

“ He that taketh not his cross and followeth after Me is not worthy of Me.”—MATT. x. 38.

THE idea of “ bearing the cross ” is such a familiar one to our minds, that it is difficult to realise that this saying must have been, to some extent, a dark one to the disciples. Though His death upon the cross was evidently much in our Lord’s mind during the whole of His ministry, His disciples seem to have

had no conception at this time of the way in which that ministry would close. The cross was a Roman, and not a Jewish punishment; and even if they had foreseen that death, and not an earthly kingdom, was to be His portion in this world, they would probably have never imagined that that death would be the cross. It was only when the full tale of His sufferings was completed that they would understand the real meaning of the words so long spoken.

The figurative idea of the Christian's cross is used in two senses in the Bible. There is the idea of self-crucifixion. "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." Our sins are to be slain even as Christ was slain upon the cross, they are to be nailed to the cross with the bleeding Saviour. But there is also the idea of cross-bearing. Part of the Roman punishment consisted in the criminal carrying his own cross upon his shoulders to the place of execution, and it is to this custom that Christ here refers. He tells us that so far from Christianity being, as some would have us suppose, a state of selfish and complacent satisfaction—so far from the Christian being quietly content with his position, and making no effort after further holiness—it is, on the contrary, by continual suffering alone that the disciple can become like his Master. "He that taketh not up his cross and followeth after Me is not worthy of Me."

The life of Christ was one long self-denial from Bethlehem to Calvary; had He ever for one moment

pleased Himself the perfection of His character would have been destroyed. It is in this self-denial that He bids us imitate Him, if we would be worthy to be called by His name. "He that findeth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for My sake shall find it." It is by abnegation alone that we truly gain what we would have. He who "loses his life," who sacrifices a desired career, a cherished ambition, a long-sought pleasure, or a congenial labour, at the call of Christ, will find at last the hopes he laid aside fulfilled in a fairer world, a fuller life. It is not always what seems self-sacrifice to men that is true self-sacrifice in the eyes of God. When we persistently seek our own desires by following what some might call the "higher life," in neglect of the numberless duties that God has placed in our path, we are as far from the kingdom of God as those who stifle the voice of Christ with this world's cares and pleasures. The mother who grieves over the numberless duties that fill up the hours she once spent in prayer, the father whose strength is spent in labouring to feed the children entrusted to his care, may take comfort from these words. It is with the spiritual, no less than with the social and intellectual life, that he who loses shall gain. God can make the everyday duties that He has laid upon us as full of sanctifying power as the grandest acts of devotion, if we will but fulfil them faithfully. It is only as we cast aside altogether the chains of self and take up the cross that God ordains for us,

that we are worthy to be called followers of the Crucified.

“ Such was the life Thou livedst, self-abjuring,
Thine own pains never easing,
Our burdens bearing, our just doom enduring,
A life without self-pleasing.”

But some may say, How can we put aside the cross that God lays upon us? If He is Almighty we cannot escape from His hand. All men have some cross to bear; how is it, then, that Christ speaks of cross-bearing as a special mark of His servants?

The answer is evident. Christ does not speak only of cross-bearing; something else is needed. “ He that taketh not his cross and *followeth after Me.*” How many bear the inevitable sufferings of their lot with impatience, with discontent, and even with anger! To follow Christ is to bear our cross willingly and gladly, to account it our highest privilege to be made partakers of His sufferings. It is only as we thus accept the cross that its pain will be beneficial to our souls, and bring forth in us the peaceable fruits of righteousness.

In submitting to the cross it loses all its sting; it is no longer a hard and mysterious dispensation, but the blessed sign of our fellowship with Christ, only to be laid down when the need for chastening is over and the cross is changed into the crown!

Fear not the cross ; I bore the cross for thee, it weighed My heart through three - and - thirty years ; I bore it gladly for My people's sake, and now I bid thee. bear the cross for Me. Faint not beneath its burden, for My strength is still sufficient for thine every need, till pain is past and thou shalt enter in, leaving thy cross outside the gates of gold !

Grant, O Lord, that as we are baptized into the death of Thy blessed Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, so by continually mortifying our corrupt affections we may be buried with Him, and that through the grave and gate of death we may pass to our joyful resurrection ; for His merits, who died and was buried, and rose again for us, Thy Son Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

TWENTY-THIRD DAY.

“ Sing praise to God who reigns above,
The God of all creation ;
The God of power, the God of love,
The God of our salvation.
With healing balm my soul He fills
And every faithless murmur stills :
To God all praise and glory.

“ Thus all my toilsome way along
I sing aloud Thy praises,
That men may hear the grateful song
My voice unwearied raises :
Be joyful in the Lord, my heart ;
Both soul and body, bear your part :
To God all praise and glory.”

“ These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.”—JOHN xv. 11.

Is it possible that those who go through life bearing the cross should also be joyful ? Can it be that we are commanded to be joyful as we are commanded to be humble, holy, gentle, and loving ? Joy is a bright and fleeting vision, passionately sought for, eagerly welcomed while it will stay with us, but how can it be cultivated as a Christian grace ?

Yet the fruit of the Spirit is joy, as well as long-

suffering, goodness, and faith, and the same Bible which says "Be holy," says also "Be joyful." "Curses shall come upon thee," says the prophet of old, "and shall pursue thee and overtake thee till thou be destroyed, because thou servedst not the Lord thy God with joyfulness and with gladness of heart."

We are none of us inclined to underrate the attraction of joy; we all know that a joyful heart is a sunbeam in a house, that brightness and gladness make the wheels of life go pleasantly, and lighten many a dreary cloud. But though we appreciate joy to the full, we are always ready to excuse the want of it in ourselves. "It is my nature to be sad," we say, or "Who could be joyful under such circumstances as mine?" and we think that words like these will clear us from all blame. Yet if joy is a Christian duty we must not think that God will overlook our neglect of it for reasons like these.

But we may say, If pain and affliction and self-denial are to be our lot, how can we hope to be joyful? If we are never to please ourselves, how can we find pleasure? Those of us who argue in this way have entirely misunderstood Christ's words; He teaches us here that joy is to be looked for, not where men ordinarily seek it, in the gratification of their own desires, but in this very self-sacrifice which we are ready to urge as an excuse. "My joy shall remain in you," He says; *My* joy, the joy that belongs to Me, that is characteristic of Me. And what

was the joy of Christ? To do the Father's will, and to lay down His life for the salvation of the world! This perfect joy of self-sacrifice is to be fulfilled in us; we are to partake of the joy of Christ that our joy may be full.

Such a joy as this is not dependent upon earthly happiness; "Your joy no man taketh from you." Sickness, poverty, affliction, death itself cannot remove it, for it is God-given, and amid all the changes and chances of this mortal life "His servants shall sing for joy of heart."

There is many a time when we are driven to think that joy is the most difficult of Christian graces. It is much easier to give way when things go wrong, to lie down in despair and let the waves go over our heads. But just as it is the most difficult of graces, it is also the most blessed. It is only those who live very near to Christ who can take the crosses of life not merely with patience, but also with joy. In Him is joy, a well of joy, springing up and flooding our lives with light; the joy of a heart at rest with Him, "in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." It is only as we learn to share in the joy of Christ that we shall be able to show it in our lives. It is no easy matter to share in the gladness of others; for hundreds who weep with those that weep, there are but few who rejoice with them that do rejoice. Yet this is not a less duty than the other; and Christ, though

weary and worn Himself, with burdens the weight of which we can never know, was always ready to sympathise in the joy of others.

Yet sometimes we are tempted to say, There are hearts in the world who cannot rejoice, hearts whose load is so heavy that their human strength cannot bear up against it; what shall we say for them? To them also comes the word of God, Rejoice, for the joy cometh; "weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning!" It is pain and grief to which we see no ending that we cannot bear; if we have a prospect of certain relief, however distant, we can wait till the clouds pass away. So it is with those whose lives are hid with Christ in God; whatever trials surround them, they can rejoice even while they sorrow, for they know that the day will speedily break, "When the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

O Almighty God, who alone canst order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men, grant unto Thy people that they may love the thing which Thou commandest, and desire that which Thou dost promise; that so, among the sundry and manifold changes of the world, our hearts may surely there be fixed where true joys are to be found; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

TWENTY-FOURTH DAY.

“ Wait on the Lord for what He hath to give,
O restless heart;

"When thou hast stilled thyself to rest in Him
O throbbing heart;

"Then will He grant thee all thine own desire,
O longing heart!

Sunlight of joy may even here be given
If so He will—if not, sunrise in Heaven !

"Take heed and beware of covetousness, for a man's life consisteth not of the abundance of things which he possesseth."—LUKE xii. 15.

WE are all of us subject to depression, grey days of the soul, when this world seems bare and empty, and we long for something to fill the void and inspire us with new life. It is in these moods that we are liable to fall into the sin of covetousness.

“ Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,
Featured like him, like him with friends possest,
Desiring this man’s art and that man’s scope,
With what I most enjoy contented least.”

It is not only wealth that leads to a breach of the tenth commandment. We covet love when we see other hearts surrounded with affection and kindness, when warmth and light are lavished upon them and we must tread a cold and solitary pathway. We covet learning when we see opportunities of knowledge put in other men’s way which perhaps they neglect or despise, while we who are hungering for a share of the rich feast are obliged to deny ourselves even a few crumbs. We covet power, when we see those whom we think far less wise or prudent than ourselves entrusted with the reins of government, while we have to wait and serve. We covet happiness, when we see other lives flooded with sunshine while our sky is dark and the winter winds whistle round our heads.

Do our Lord’s words sound harsh? Do we say that if we saw a cold and half-starved heart or mind we should not thus bid it beware of sin, but grant it the possessions for which it so eagerly longed? Christ was more loving and sympathetic than any human being can ever hope to be, and we may rest assured that He would not speak one unnecessary word of warning and reproof. We must not believe that He underrates the trials of any lot; He knows as none else knows the sorrows

of the heart, He shares as none else shares its pain and desire. He bids us beware of covetousness, because He knows only too well that these possessions for which we long can never still the yearnings of our souls.

What is it that we desire? Not riches, nor power, nor fame, but the *life* that these bring with them; the scope, the strength, and the renewed vitality.

“ ‘Tis life whereof our nerves are scant;
Life and not death for which we pant—
More life and fuller that we want.”

And this life, this secret of strength and energy and power, does not lie, our Lord tells us, in possession, in the heaping up of earthly treasures, be they intellectual, emotional, or material. These are not life; they are the bread, the support of life, but “man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” He knows our hearts are often empty, our lives often dull and cold, but though we may have to tread the same old weary round day after day, “His mercies are new every morning;” and though we may feel that our nerves are worn, our pulses weak, He has the dew of youth, and with Him is the fountain of life.

St. Paul speaks of covetousness as idolatry, because those who covet earthly good have fixed their hearts on some object that is dearer to them than Christ. We must put Christ first in our lives,

esteeming Him more precious than all the treasures of earth. Then only will our lives be without covetousness, and we shall be content with such things as we have, when we find our rest and joy in the thought that He hath said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."

The Book of Ecclesiastes is the story of an empty life and a search for satisfaction. "I gave my heart to know wisdom ; I said, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure ; I sought in mine heart to give myself unto wine. I made me great works, I builded me houses, I planted me vineyards, I got me servants and maidens, and gathered me also silver and gold." Was not this happiness? No ; his possessions availed him nought. "I looked on all that I had wrought, and behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun ; therefore I hated life, yea, I hated all my labour which I had taken under the sun."

Is there, then, no possibility of happiness in human life? The preacher tells us that he found it in the quiet and plain path of duty : "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter, Fear God, and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man."

In God's service is the satisfaction of man. We desire life, and our God will grant us the "power of an endless life ;" we desire riches, and we shall be made partakers of the "unsearchable riches of

Christ ; " we desire love, and the " love of God is shed abroad in our hearts ; " we desire knowledge, and we are taught of Him " in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

It is this truth, and this alone, that equalises the lot of men. Why should some be rich and some poor, some high and some low ? Because it is not in these things that a man's *life* consists. He may possess all the treasures and glory of the world, he may be poor as the poorest beggar upon earth, but his life " is hid with Christ in God."

What is thy life ? It is the breath of God, that this world cannot give nor take away. Glory and wealth cannot increase thy life, nor from it poverty diminish aught. Come unto Me, My child ; when thou art weak, thou shalt renew thy failing strength, shalt run and not be weary, mount with eagle's wings, walk and not tire, when thy soul has drunk of the pure fountains of eternal life !

O Almighty God, whom truly to know is everlasting life ; grant us perfectly to know Thy Son Jesus Christ to be the Way, the Truth, and the Life, that, following the steps of Thy holy apostles, we may steadfastly walk in the way that leadeth to eternal life, through the same Thy Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

TWENTY-FIFTH DAY.

“If God’s light shines within my heart,
Then all the world will know
Its holy flame is kindled there
By the reflected glow.

“If God’s voice sounds within my soul,
Thro’ joy, or pain, or strife,
The world will never fail to catch
Some music from my life.

“If God’s love brightens all my way
Until I see His face,
I shall give forth to all around
The sweetness of His grace.”

“A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.”—MATT. v. 14.

“He entered into a house, and would have no man know it, but He could not be hid.”—MARK vii. 24.

THE violet shrinks down among its cool green leaves, and strives to hide itself from the eyes of men; yet, as we pass, its fragrance comes up on the air, and we say, “There must be violets there.” The lark soars up to Heaven’s gate, it rises through the sky until even the tiny dark speck is swallowed up in the blue; yet, as we stand beneath, the piercing sweetness of its song fills our ear, and we say, “There is a lark.”

So is it with the soul. There is a quality, holy, strong, and pure, which lowliness cannot disguise nor grandeur obscure, a quality which "cannot be hid," because it penetrates straight to the hearts of men.

The life of our Lord Jesus Christ was one of outward poverty. No earthly honours greeted Him in His course through this world. He was despised and rejected of men. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. Yet, through it all, there was a Divine holiness in Him that shone out resplendent, with a light that could not be extinguished, a glory and a purity that "could not be hid."

Is it thus with our lives? Does the Heaven-kindled flame shine so brightly in our hearts that no man can doubt our Christianity? Do love and peace and goodness so reflect themselves in our faces, our words, our actions, that none can mistake them? Would the first thing that struck any one about us be—This is a true follower of the Lord Jesus Christ?

It was the perfect self-sacrifice of Christ's life that made all men seek after Him. Mothers brought their children to Him to be blessed, friends brought their sick to be healed; the blind, the deaf, the lame, the dying, the dead, were brought to His feet as to an unfailing Comforter and Friend. Weary, saddened, disappointed He might be, but never once, through all His earthly life, do we read

of His help being asked in vain ! It is in the life of Christ alone that we can learn what a true Christian should be.

Yet we may say, If I had such a power, how gladly would I use it, how willingly I would restore the sick and raise the dead ! But I have not the power, and therefore I cannot be blamed for what I do not possess.

Certainly not ; but God may well doubt our fancied readiness to spend ourselves for the good of others, when He sees us so reluctant to use the powers that we *do* possess.

Christ, after telling the disciples of this inward quality, goes on to show them in what ways it may be made manifest. Forgive, love, be merciful, judge not, be filled with charity ! Can we say honestly that these are the characteristics of our lives ? Does this subtle fragrance breathe from our words and deeds, reminding men constantly of the Lord whose name we bear ? There are some who pride themselves on the fact that their religion is hidden out of sight ; they profess to love God, but they will have no man know it. These forget that true religion “*cannot* be hid.” There are others who make a point of proclaiming their profession wherever they go, who are never tired of *saying* that they are Christians. These forget that true religion has no need of profession ; if it really exists, it will be seen and known, for it “*cannot* be hid.”

There is no humility in hiding our light from the eyes of men. Christ has told us plainly that it must be seen, that our Father may be glorified. As the light of the sun fills the world with day, so that no man can say, Behold! it is the night! so, if the Sun of Righteousness truly shines in our hearts, it can never be mistaken for darkness by the world around us.

All men shall know thee! Wouldst thou bear My name, thou must be known as Mine to all the world. My love, if planted in thy heart, shall shine in all thy life. My peace shall dwell with thee. My grace shall fill thy works, and stamp thee Mine!

Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty Lord, that the truths of Thy holy Word may, through Thy grace, be so grafted inwardly in our hearts that they may bring forth in us the fruits of good living, to the honour and praise of Thy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

TWENTY-SIXTH DAY.

“Thy love

Shall chant itself its own beatitudes,
After its own life-working. A child-kiss,
Set on thy sighing lips, shall make thee glad ;
A poor man, served by thee, shall make thee rich ;
A sick man, helped by thee, shall make thee strong ;
Thou shalt be served thyself by every sense
Of service which thou renderest.”

“It is more blessed to give than to receive.”—ACTS xx. 35.

THIS saying of Christ's is unrecorded in the Gospels, but it is quoted by St. Paul in his farewell address to the elders of the church at Ephesus. The Apostle was on his way to Jerusalem, not knowing what should befall him there, except that bonds and afflictions awaited him, yet not counting even his life dear unto himself, so that he might fulfil the ministry committed unto him by the Lord Jesus. The elders wept, sorrowing most of all that they should see his face no more, but St. Paul was not to be deterred by their entreaties ; to give his life, his all, for the Master's sake, was to him more blessed than to receive a thousandfold of this world's goods.

We do not know when these words were spoken by Christ, or in what connection, but as we hear

them from St. Paul's lips they remind us of a time when One greater than he was going up to Jerusalem, not to any uncertain fate, but "to suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day." "Then Peter took Him and began to rebuke Him, saying, Be it far from Thee, Lord; this shall not be unto Thee. But He turned and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan!"

Poor loving, impulsive Peter, always eager to speak, with warm-hearted untutored zeal rushing into words before giving himself time for thought! The rebuke at first sight seems harsh. What affectionate disciple would not yearn to save his Master from shame and agony and death? Did he indeed deserve the terrible words, "Get thee behind Me, Satan!"

"Be it far from Thee, Lord." The words sound natural enough as they stand, but the marginal reading gives them a different meaning, "*Lord, pity Thyself.*" Think no more of Thy God-given mission, turn Thy back upon Thy people, leave them to their sin and death; pity Thyself, Lord, have mercy upon Thyself, save Thyself from the doom that is drawing near! Our Lord's sacrifice was a willing one; but we know from His own lips that He had a fierce temptation to pass through before He laid Himself upon the altar. "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me." We cannot tell if in that mysterious hour of agony, of which no

human soul may ever fathom the awful depths, some echo of Peter's appeal may not have lingered upon our Lord's ear and aided the tempter in his last terrible onset! "Lord, pity Thyself." Suppose for one moment that He had listened to that prayer, what would our position be now? But He, hesitating not, with a lightning flash reveals the source of those seeming words of love.

Again and again in our lives is that struggle enacted. Again and again we are urged, by our own wishes, by the counsel of our friends, by the scoffs of our enemies, to forget the divine mission which we have received and pity ourselves! Why should we always be giving of our best, pouring out love and service on an ungrateful world, and receiving nothing in return? Let us care for our own interests, seek our own pleasures, think of our own advantage; it is more blessed to receive than to give. The world takes up the same cry, Why do you labour when no one desires your help? We do not ask for your aid or your example; take care of yourselves, and let us remain in peace! It is well for us if we can trace the weary longing, the specious reasoning, the well-meant advice, to its true source, if we can fling back the words from the gates of our souls with the cry, "Get thee behind me, Satan."

It is more blessed to give than to receive, for it is only in giving that we truly receive. "Give, and it shall be given to you," is the natural law of the world, a law that cannot be broken. The heavens

send rain to the earth, and the earth gives back dew to the heavens ; the sun gives light to the moon and stars, and the moon and stars give brightness to the night. The continuous chain is never broken, or the universe could no longer exist. So is it with the souls of men ; if they refuse to give of their store they cannot receive. As Christ gave Himself upon the Cross that He might receive gifts for men, so we must give ourselves heart and soul and body for the good of the world, if we would be worthy to be called by His name.

Love is the highest gift that it is in the power of man to bestow, for as a Spanish poet has beautifully said, "To do good to others is but giving something out of what we possess ; in loving we give ourselves." Love is too often another name for selfishness ; the word in its root form is allied to the Sanskrit *lobha* = covetousness ; and what is much of our so-called love but desire for possessing the love of another ? But in love, as in all else, it is more blessed to give than to receive. *Blessed* indeed, for the word blessed means nothing but "made holy by blood of sacrifice," and as we learn to sacrifice our own wishes, our aims, our hopes, our whole being, in fact, to God and to our fellow-men, we shall taste at last, even here on earth, the sweetness of a pure and perfect pleasure.

If thou wouldest love, thou must cast self away for ever from thee ; if thou wouldest receive, thou must give all thou hast, thy knowledge, wealth, thy

powers of heart and soul, thy strength, thy all ; I gave Myself for thee, fully and freely ; give thyself for Me.

O blessed Saviour ! who didst give Thy life for the life of the world, help us so to follow Thee that we may give up ourselves to Thy service, and walk before Thee in holiness and righteousness all the days of our life, through Thy eternal merits. Amen.

TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY.

“ O Lord my God, do Thou Thy holy will—
I will lie still.
I will not stir, lest I forsake Thine arm,
And break the charm
Which lulls me, clinging to my Father’s breast,
In perfect rest.

“ O Father ! not my will, but Thine, be done !
So spake the Son.
Be this our charm, mellowing earth’s ruder noise
Of griefs and joys,
That we may cling for ever to Thy breast
In perfect rest !”

“ Not my will, but Thine, be done.”—LUKE xxii. 42.

THESE words may be called in truth a *saving clause*. “ Remove this cup from Me : nevertheless, not My will, but Thine, be done.” In that *nevertheless* lies our salvation.

As Christ was ready to submit His will to that of the Father, so must we be ready if we would be truly followers of our Master. Nor is there any fatalism in this submission, as some would have us believe. That we are able to say “ Thy will be done,” shows that we have also power to refuse to say it. Our wills are a mysterious, Heaven-descended power, planted by

God in our hearts, that we may be free agents, coming to Him by choice and not by compulsion.

As Tennyson has beautifully said—

"Our wills are ours, we know not how ;
Our wills are ours—to make them Thine !"

We often forget that the Saviour who said "Thy will be done," said also, "I come to do Thy will, O my God." To accept God's will is not merely a passive but an active condition. How is God's will to be done unless we do it ?

But before we can do God's will we must first be assured that His will is best. Many things come into our lives of which we cannot see the reason ; we are not suffered to do this or that, opportunities which we deem most valuable are taken from us, work which we long for is denied to us, crosses are laid upon us, troubles and difficulties, and we are tempted to say, "All things do *not* work together for good to them who love God !" While thoughts like these take possession of us we cannot accept God's will. But these thoughts arise from misconception only. What is God's will for us ? "This is the will of God, even your sanctification." It is not our earthly good towards which God works ; our earthly good may or may not be a part of His plan, but it is only a means, and not an end. The end towards which God shapes His dealings with us is our ultimate holiness, our purity, our perfection. How often we

look back to days long past, and see how good and right was the loss or the disappointment that we then deemed so hard. In the light of the present we should choose just the same for ourselves ; and yet, acknowledging this, how hard we still find it to accept the will of God in the difficulty that is now pressing upon us !

No more touching words ever fell from the lips of the poet Dante, that restless, eager, melancholy Florentine, than these, "His will is our peace." "Who art thou, O man, that resisteth His will ?" No peace can come through that, no help, no healing ; if He is Almighty, He knows all things ; if He knows all things, canst thou not trust Him ? If thou wilt not accept His will He must force it upon thee, if by any means He may work thy sanctification ; but that will bring thee tears and sorrow and pain ; to do His will is thy peace.

And in His will is thy strength. There is no more frequent mistake made in the world than the confusion of self-will and strength of will. A blind obstinacy cannot be strength. Thus we hear people saying that they admire such characters as that of Satan as drawn by Milton in "Paradise Lost," or of Napoleon Buonaparte ; not recognising that their so-called strength of will was no more than base and ignoble selfishness. Crime can never be strength.

"Oh ! well for him whose will is strong,
He suffers, but he will not suffer long—
He suffers, but he cannot suffer wrong.

But ill for him who, bettering not with time,
Corrupts the strength of Heaven-descended will,
And ever weaker grows through acted crime,
Or seeming genial venial fault,
Recurring and suggesting still."

A strong will in the true sense of the words must be a pure and holy will, for crime is corruption, and corruption is weakness and decay. "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me," was Christ's explanation of His strength; and the justness of His judgment rested in the fact that He sought not His own will, but the will of His Father in Heaven. To obey God's will, to trust His will, to do His will, this is the peace and rest of our hearts. This is the secret of happiness and of holiness, and this is the way that leadeth unto life, for they who love their own way shall be given up unto their own way, but "he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

Trust Me, My child; lean thou upon My will; thou canst not see the windings of the path; I know each step, and I will guide thee right. Why wouldst thou turn aside and leave Me thus? Strength is not found in self, nor peace in pride. Take thou My choice and do thy Father's will, till thou at last shalt find His will is thine!

Grant to us, Lord, we beseech Thee, the spirit to think and do always such things as be rightful; that we, who cannot do anything that is good without Thee, may by Thee be enabled to live according to Thy will, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY.

“ My Saviour, can it ever be
That I should gain by losing Thee ?
The watchful mother tarries nigh,
Though sleep have closed her infant’s eye,
For should he wake and find her gone,
She knows she could not bear his moan.
But I am weaker than a child,
And Thou art more than mother dear ;
Without Thee Heaven were but a wild,
How can I live without Thee here ?”

“ ‘Tis good for you that I should go,
You lingering yet awhile below ;’
‘Tis Thine own gracious promise, Lord !
Thy saints have proved the faithful word
When Heaven’s bright boundless avenue
Far opened on their eager view,
And homeward to Thy Father’s throne,
Still lessening, brightening on their sight
The shadowy car went soaring on,
They tracked Thee up the abyss of light.”

“ It is expedient for you that I go away.”—JOHN xvi. 7.

WE can almost see the start of incredulous surprise as these words fell upon the ears of the disciples. Expedient that their Master should leave them, that they should no longer have the comfort of His presence, the benefit of His teaching ! They

could have understood that it might be good for them to lose friends or riches, or any of this world's goods; but to lose Him through whom they had found the way of everlasting life could not be expedient. Yet Christ had said, “Because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart; nevertheless I tell you the truth, it is expedient for you that I go away.”

Our Lord had designs for the future of which at this time His disciples had no conception; the Resurrection was still a mystery to them, the ascension and the coming of the Holy Ghost were still dim to their minds; but as the full and glorious scheme was unfolded before them, and they understood more perfectly the nature of Christ's work, their mourning was turned into praise, and no sooner had they watched Him ascend up into heaven than they “returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple blessing and praising God.”

Change and development are the law of the world; as long as there is life there is change and growth. Yet how often we rebel against change; we fear it and shrink from it with an agony of dread. We would rather bear the ills we have than fly to others that we know not of. Yet, as Lord Bacon reminds us, “Time is the greatest innovator;” the child passes into the youth, the youth into the man, morning becomes noon, and noon becomes night; while time lasts it must bring change.

And sad though we feel it at times when we bow before the inevitable law of change, we cannot but also acknowledge that change is expedient for us. Our affections would soon become set on the things of earth if changes did not remind us that this world is not our home. We may at times feel in some slight degree what the disciples felt when their Lord was taken from them. How often we rebel when some dear friend from whom we have received help and counsel and comfort, is removed from us by death or by separation; and yet how often, as we look back upon the past, we are forced to own that such changes were for the best. We might have clung too much to the earthly love, and so forgotten the Giver of all good things; or we might have depended so entirely upon another for our spiritual and intellectual life, that we should never have learned to walk alone.

Without change our lives would become like standing water, instead of the glorious waves of a mighty river. The poet Coleridge has drawn us a wonderful picture of such a state in his "Ancient Mariner." The mariner has committed a great crime, and while most poets would have made his punishment consist in a terrible storm, Coleridge shows us the horrors of a stagnant calm.

"Down dropt the breeze, the sails dropt down,
'Twas sad as sad could be,
And we did only speak to break
The silence of the sea.

" All in a hot and copper sky
The bloody sun at noon
Right up above the mast did stand,
No bigger than the moon.

" Day after day, day after day,
We stuck, nor breath nor motion,
As idly as a painted ship
Upon a painted ocean."

He describes the drought, the baking thirst, the rotting of the very sea, and in this awful picture he shows us what our lives would become if the wind of God's Spirit never moved upon the face of the waters.

If we have made up our minds to trust God's will, we shall not fear the changes that will come. We can bear pain from those we love. "I was dumb; I opened not my mouth, because *Thou* didst it." There is One alone who changes not, with whom is "no variableness, neither shadow of turning," and it is only as our hearts are firmly fixed upon Him that we shall be able, with unmoved courage, to meet the changes of our earthly lot. If He is our God and guide we shall not even fear the last great change of all, for though "we shall not all sleep, we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." Then shall all changes be over for ever, for, as the poet Spenser sings, in quaint and touching strain—

" Then 'gan I think on that which Nature said
Of that same time when no more change shall be,

But steadfast rest of all things, firmly stay'd
Upon the pillars of Eternity ;
That is contrayr to mutability.
For all that moveth doth in change delight,
But henceforth all shall rest eternally
With Him that is the God of Sabath hight—
Oh ! that great Sabath's God, grant me that Sabath's sight."

Assist us mercifully, O Lord, we beseech Thee,
and dispose the way of Thy servants towards the
attainment of everlasting salvation, that among
all the changes and chances of this mortal life
they may ever be defended by Thy most gracious
and ready help, through Jesus Christ Our Lord.
Amen.

TWENTY-NINTH DAY.

“ ‘Tis not the cross I have to bear,
‘Tis not this cup of pain and care,
Which constitute my bitter grief :
It is the heart of unbelief !

“ ‘Twas unbelief which sowed the thorn
By which these weary feet were torn ;
‘Tis unbelief and fear which hide
The pleasant brooks on either side.

“ ‘Tis faith which hails the fountain’s flow,
And sees the desert lily blow,
And listens patiently to hear
The blessed Master drawing near.

“ Dear Lord, from whom our hearts receive
The grace to hear Thee and believe,
Take from my cross its only grief,
And help—oh help my unbelief !”

“ Let not your heart be troubled : ye believe in God ; believe also in Me.”—JOHN xiv. 1.

No attempt at comfort is more ineffectual than advice not to be troubled, “ Do not grieve,” “ Do not worry.” When our hearts are full of sorrow our friends might as soon tell the sun not to shine, or the rain not to fall, as tell us not to be troubled. But it is altogether different when the words are spoken by a divine Voice. Christ has the power

to make our troubles cease; His "Peace, be still," can cause the tempest to lull and the billows to sink to sleep. He does not merely advise us to cease from sorrow, but He shows us a way by which we may be able to do it and escape from the pressure of difficulty and grief. And the remedy is this—*Believe*.

The disciples were sorrowing at the thought of coming separation, and their Master bids them not despair; they trust in God, let them trust also in Him, and believe that He will do all things well. The same words had fallen from His lips as He stood at the bedside of the dead child, and turning to the weeping father and mother, to whom all possibility of belief seemed past, said to them, "Be not afraid, only believe."

Faith is the unfailing medicine of the heart, for faith looks beyond the sorrows of the moment and cries "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." If we believe that God is our all-loving Father, that Christ is our all-loving Saviour, we have a sure defence against the assaults of doubt and dread. "I will trust and not be afraid," and if the waves should rage horribly, and our hearts, overwhelmed in the tempest, should fail them for fear, then, "What time I am afraid I will trust in Thee."

It is only faith that can give us strength to conquer the world, the flesh, and the devil. "Who is he that overcometh the world but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?"

If we sin what remedy have we but faith in Christ, for "he that believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins."

If we forget our profession as servants of the living God, and fall away into backsliding, faith can still restore us to our Father's arms, for "he that believeth is justified from all things."

Are we faint with the labour and heat of the day, weary with our toil for God and men? Faith can renew our strength and give us peace and quietness, for "we which have believed do enter into rest."

Is death at work around us, bearing away those who are nearest and dearest to our hearts? Faith, and faith alone, can dry the mourner's tears. "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them that sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him."

It is only when we land upon the further shore, when faith is swallowed up in sight, that we shall need no longer to believe. "Now abideth these three, faith, hope, and charity, but the greatest of these is charity." Love is eternal; love is the atmosphere of heaven, but faith and hope shall be left behind when we pass to that land where we shall see "no longer through a glass darkly, but face to face."

"Believe in Me!" It is no blind faith that Christ asks of us, no dim trust that "somewhere, far off," there is a Supreme Being who is not utterly careless of the creatures He has made. It is a living, loving, personal Saviour, who speaks to

us ; by faith we see and know Him even here, " unto you which believe He is precious."

Nor need we fear that our trust will be ill-placed, that it will find no sure foundation in the day of trial. God hath promised that they who put their trust in Him shall never be confounded. " If we believe not, yet He abideth faithful ; He cannot deny Himself."

Be not afraid, only believe ! The words are borne in upon our hearts in all that we are called upon to pass through, and He who bids us believe will also give us the strength to obey the command. His is no barren counsel, but a life-giving word of power, for He who says " Believe," will also " help our unbelief."

Be not afraid, My child, only believe ; believe that I am God, and that the power in heaven and earth is Mine. Trust thou in Me through dark days and through bright ; in joy and woe, in pain and peace, still put thy trust in Me ; till thou shalt stand upon the deathless shore, where faith and trust are swallowed up in sight.

Almighty and everlasting God, who hast taught us that without faith it is impossible to please Thee, grant us so perfectly and without all doubt to believe in Thy Son Jesus Christ, that our faith in Thy sight may never be reproved. Hear us, O Lord, through the same Jesus Christ, to whom with Thee and the Holy Ghost be all honour and glory, now and for evermore. Amen.

THIRTIETH DAY.

“ They gather there ! they gather there !
This is the Father’s house, the rest
Prepared, O Christ, for Thee and Thine,—
They pass that threshold and are blest ;
Safe sheltered near Thy throne and heart,
Reached nevermore by sorrow’s dart,
Thou giv’st them, the long waiting o’er—
Thy blessed face to see for evermore !

“ They gather there ! they gather there !
Ah ! life through death, life just begun
When the full cup of joy they taste,
Nor pleasures pall, nor treasures waste !
In Him they live, the Holy One,
By whose dear cross each wears a crown,
At whose dear feet each casts it down ;
And while all chant His matchless name,
Intenser burns in each love’s quenchless flame.”

“ I go to prepare a place for you.”—JOHN xiv. 2.

WHEN faith is like to be overwhelmed in the storms of life, look up to the Home beyond the sky ; if you believe that I am God, believe also that I have power to admit you into My Father’s mansions, that I am willing and ready to open those gates for you.

We lose much of the comfort that we might derive from our Lord’s words, by the vague and mystic way in which we talk of the heavenly home

that He is preparing for us. God has told us but little about that blessed country, for the simple reason that the heart of mortal man cannot as yet understand its glories. It is useless to describe anything to a man in an unknown tongue, and it is not until we have learned the language of heaven that we shall know what God hath prepared for them that love Him. The Revelation of St. John is an inspired poem ; it leaves upon the mind an image of happiness and beauty far transcending all human thought, and beyond this we are forbidden to go. The pearly gates, the streets of gold, the river of crystal, the walls of jasper, are figurative words which impress a glorious vision upon the mind ; yet after all they are but figures, and heaven is still the “undiscovered country.”

But if we believe that Christ is God we are also bound to believe that He will fulfil His promise, and prepare a home for us which will be an abode of everlasting bliss. The child does not fear that its father’s care will fail to provide for it a new home when the old one is broken up, even if it should have to seek that new home in a strange and distant land ; it believes that its father knows its wants and will supply them. Shall the Christian’s faith be less ? Was not this one reason of our Lord’s sojourn upon earth, that He might learn by experience the wants and desires of mankind, and so be able to prepare a place for them in His Father’s mansions ? Not to angels does He entrust the work ;

they have not felt the needs and the longings of our humanity. It is the man Christ Jesus who has passed Himself through every phase of our nature, who has gone before that He may be ready to receive us unto Himself, and who invites our trust in Him not only for this world but for the world to come.

Yet something we know, enough to fill our hearts with joy and praise. We know that we shall see our Saviour in glorified human form, and therefore we know also that our bodies shall rise again, and that we shall live no vague spirit life, but a life far more real and complete than that which we live upon earth. "This same Jesus," no shadowy spirit, but bearing still the marks of His crucifixion, shall come again, and bring with Him those who rest from their labours. If we could once believe this with no dim assent, but with full and clear realisation, it would sweep away from our minds many of the mists and shadows with which we have enshrouded the life beyond the grave.

We know also from our Lord's own lips that all the best aspirations of our hearts will be fulfilled in the Home that He is preparing. He who lives here a life of self-denial, and lays down his own desires that he may bear the cross of Christ, shall there, in the full light of everlasting day, find all that he has lost.

*"Do not I mark them, all the joys
That earth with ruthless hand destroys?
Patience, my child, those joys have passed
Into God's keeping firm and fast,
And thou shalt find them all at last!"*

One thing also we know. In Heaven there will be no sin. All that defiles will be shut outside the gates ; no jealousy in Heaven, no suspicions in Heaven, no doubts, no misunderstandings, no unkindness there. Not only every deed, but every thought will be purified ; every motive, every desire, made clear as the noonday.

And lastly, this precious truth we know ; Christ will be with us, " His servants shall serve Him, and they shall see His face." If we love Christ here, if He is to us what He may and can be to the human soul, we shall find our Heaven in this assurance. It is no dim mystic vision of the future that fills our hopes, but a living, loving Friend. We may indeed wear crowns of glory and chant our praises upon harps of gold, but Heaven lies for us in this brief promise, " With Christ, which is far better."

An unknown land, a dim and distant world ! But I, thy Saviour, dwell upon those shores. I wait to welcome thee, and in the light that hides Me from thine eyes, I still prepare thy dwelling-place ; that when thine hour is come no strange abode may meet thee, but a Home, where thou shalt trace the loving hand of Him, who was thy Friend upon earth's darker shore.

O God, who hast prepared for them that love Thee such good things as pass man's understanding, pour into our hearts such love toward Thee, that we, loving Thee above all things, may obtain Thy promises, which exceed all that we can desire, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THIRTY-FIRST DAY.

“ Peace, peace !
Wrought by the Spirit of Might,
In thy deepest sorrow and sorest strife,
In the changes and chances of mortal life,
It is thine, beloved ! Christ’s own bequest,
Which vainly the tempter shall strive to wrest ;
It is now thy right.

“ Peace, peace !
Look for its bright increase,
Deepening, widening, year by year,
Like a sunlit river, strong, calm, and clear ;
Lean on His love through this earthly vale,
For His word and His work shall never fail,
And ‘ He is our Peace ! ’ ”

“ Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you ! ”—
JOHN xiv. 27.

CHRIST had neither wealth nor lands to leave when His hour of departure came. He had given His disciples the glory and the love which He had received from His Father, and now, before He leaves them, He gives them His peace. A last gift is treasured and valued with no ordinary affection, and the last gift of Christ was indeed a priceless one, for it was a peace that this world could neither give

nor take away. It was His own peace that He gave—no common treasure, but one taken out of the storehouse of God Himself. He is not the Prince of Joy, nor the Prince of Pleasure, but the Prince of Peace. He gives us peace “always by all means,” for peace comes to us sometimes on the wings of sorrow and pain. When we long to give peace to those we love we try to smooth away the trials and difficulties that stand in their path, but Christ gives “not as the world giveth;” He gives not only “peace after pain,” but peace *through* pain. By all means, by disappointment and grief and clouds, as well as by gladness and joy and sunshine, that He may sanctify us wholly, and give us “an assured peace,” or “peace of truth.”

For much that the world calls peace is not true peace; a calm indifference is not peace, nor the untroubled content of ignorance. There is quiet stillness in the fortress when it rests beneath the sunshine, and knows nothing of the foe who moment by moment is advancing to attack it; there is silence on the battlefield when the struggle is over, and the moon pours down its cold silvery beams on the white faces of the dead. But these are not peace! True peace is that which has power to “keep” or “garrison” our hearts against all invading forces; tribulation, anguish, and dangers may assail us, but if the peace of God rules in our lives they can never reach the inner recesses of the soul.

There are some who scorn a creed of peace; who

tell us that the man who is true and strong can stand in his own strength and fight down the opposing forces of the world with no craven cry for peace ! But we reply that it is only the man who is at peace with God who can truly and strongly fight in the battle of life. "A house divided against itself cannot stand," and neither can a man whose foes are those of that innermost household, the heart ! If discord and anarchy reign in his breast, how can he present an undivided front to the forces of the enemy ? We must first have peace with God before we can find strength to fight against sin and wrong.

But how can this peace be obtained ? There are some who long for peace all their lives, and yet never find it ; who strive for something that shall quell the tumult of the soul, yet never reach it. Where shall peace be found ? The words of the ancient poet come back upon our hearts in grand and holy melody—"Acquaint thyself with Him, and be at peace !" But how shall a knowledge of God bring me peace ? God is to me an abstraction, a power, a force, a mind that works in the universe ; how shall I find peace in the dealings of a relentless fate ? Or, God is to me a judge ; I dread Him, for I have sinned against Him, I would hide from Him in the darkness and the depths ; how shall a knowledge of Him bring me peace ?

There is only one answer to such questions, and until men will accept that answer their souls must

be tossed to and fro on winds of doubt and tempest —“We have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” “He is our peace,” for by His atoning blood He hath covered our sins and brought us back into the light of a Father’s love. To rest on Christ is peace; “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee.” Without the mediation of Him upon whom the chastisement of our peace was laid, the soul can never dare to enter the presence of God. But when the ransom is paid, when sin is forgiven and iniquity cast into the depths of the sea, the world may rage and storm as it will, trouble and tempests may come, but nothing can rob the Christian of his Master’s divine gift. His feet are “shod with peace,” according to St. Paul’s beautiful metaphor. The road may be stony, the thorns may be sharp, but he whose feet are shod with peace will tread safely and securely, until the last step is taken, and through the valley of the shadow of death we pass to the land where the Prince of Peace shall reign for ever and for ever.

Hear thou My voice! I have a gift for thee, that this world cannot give nor take away; I bring thee peace—peace with the God of heaven, peace that shall stay thy soul through night and day. Through dark days and through bright it ever flows; still like a river flows and fills thy life, till in the shelter of My Father’s home, God’s perfect peace shall crown thy longing heart.

Grant, we beseech Thee, merciful Lord, to Thy faithful people pardon and peace, that they may be cleansed from all their sins and serve Thee with a quiet mind, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

May the peace of God, that passeth all understanding, keep our hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God and of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, both now and evermore. Amen.

THE END.

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